

Final Fantasy VII: The Revolution

by L u f i a

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Summary: The beginning of another story. What if Aeris doesn't die at the Temple of Ancient..?

1. Default Chapter Title

The Revolution: Chapter One The Revolution -Final Fantasy 7

> Part One: The Slumber

> Chapter One

> By L u f i a<a>

>
 _...

>
d...

>
 Cloud

>
 Wake up, Cloud

>
 Who's there?

>
 Ha, you forgot? Well, doesn't matter I have something to say to you_

>

> A soft, yet a note of teasing in that voice as if it contain million laughter

> Am I dreaming?

> Oh, yeah you are you probably won't remember even if you wake up

> Remember what?

> Oh, everything

>
 A sigh. Yet another smile she seemed to be happy. Cloud now was certain who that person was.

>
 He murmured, relief washing over him. The voice giggled. Oh, well, might as well as let you see. She said as if she's doing him a favor.

> Suddenly, Cloud was plunged into the place he had never been before. What's more, Aeris was standing not far away from him. She said in light greeting which was very much her way. Cloud glanced

around.
 Where am I? He asked. The place was new for him. It was quite peaceful. Though Cloud couldn't see it very clearly, he saw the forest, the trees, and the bright light that shone from afar. The trees were tall and majestic, and it looked down upon them with hospitality. If he didn't know better, it seemed as if they were watching them, observing them. Cloud looked at Aeris once more, who were watching him with her hands clasped behind her back and her eyes dreamy.

>
 Is this real?

> Aeris shook her head with a smile. Why did she look so happy, yet so sad at the same time? <p>

> Cloud remembered that he was dreaming. But it seems so real He murmured, looking around at the mist around him. And this air? <p>

> That is the proof that you are dreaming right now, Cloud. Aeris told him. It won't let you move, it won't let you do anything that you wish to do. Not in your dream. In dreams, you just have to go along what it has in stored for us.
 Cloud tried moving his legs. They didn't feel quite attached to him, but it was moving, and that's what counted.

> At least my sub-consciousness has let me walk. He commented, walking over to her. Aeris laughed. And make mildly funny remarks about them, huh, Cloud? Then, she subdued her tone. This place is called 'The sleeping forest'. She said softly. The path starts from here. <p>

> Cloud glanced at the way Aeris was looking. It was the path made by the dark hovering trees, and the entrance was giving out mysterious light that made almost impossible to see what it leads to. Cloud looked at Aeris once more. <p>

The path?

> Yeah, my path. Aeris answered. This might be the only way. <p>

> What was she talking about? Cloud wasn't sure whether he wanted to hear this.

> Sephiroth has got to be stopped. Fortunately, I think I know how.
 You do? Cloud suddenly felt nauseated. He had this nagging feeling behind his head that was yelling at him to do something. And there was this one shred of unclear memory that felt so strong in his heart. Sensing this, Aeris glanced at him and smiled. I told you, you wouldn't be able to remember this. The more you try, the more confused you'll get. And it'll leave you in another dream more complicated than this. She warned in a teasing way.

>
 How can you be here, Aeris? Cloud asked, stopping himself from thinking of another pang of feelings of urge that refused to take shape in his head. How can you exist in my dream, and yet, act on your own free will?

>
 Aeris took a step forward towards the light. A wisp of silent wind swept past her, making her long dark brown hair fly behind her. Because I am praying right now. She said. I was just praying and I

felt like talking to you. I just wanted to see you before I go.

> The pang tightened its knob on his chest. He wanted so much to go over to her and stop her from whatever she was going to do next. â€œand explain the things he had done earlier. The memory was briefly back in his head. The voice inside his head, her face, the beating

 Cloud suddenly remembered.

I hit you, didn't I?

> Aeris smiled. Doesn't matter now. I'm okay.
 Cloud felt terrible. I'm so sorry. I couldn't help it. The voice of Sephiroth in his head it felt like a curse. An inevitable curse.

> Aeris sighed. I have to go. Suddenly, she raised her head and looked at Cloud with an odd smile on her face. I really enjoyed that date, Cloud. With that, she waved her hand and started to run towards the bright light.

> Her sudden departure dismayed Cloud. Wait, Aeris! He shouted and he started to run after her.
 She was going so fast. Cloud tried so hard to gain the distance between them, but it seemed as if he was put into a barrier. As if a huge wall blocked him. Aeris was hardly visible now. The light didn't seem to bother her as she ran without looking back. Cloud felt sweat tickling down his face. He felt exhausted. His desire to run and the lack of will power to do so, made him almost raging mad.

> ...Damn! What's wrong with me?!

> And Aeris was gone. She disappeared the moment she entered the light. Cloud stopped running and stood there, panting and gasping.
<p>

He murmured. _Where'd she run off to?_

>
 She's really not giving up, is she? A familiar voice spoke beside him. Cloud jerked his head in that direction.

> Sephirothâ€œ

> Cloud's heart stopped. No, it actually started to beat faster. Sephiroth, standing only a few feet away from him, was leaning on the tree. His sea-green eyes were cold. It brought a chill in his heart.

 With his face lowered, Sephiroth looked at Cloud with a steady, yet sharp gaze that seemed to penetrate his very thought. He grinned, a wicked one. The side of his mouth curved upward.

> We've got to stop her soon. He said. <p>

> Then everything went black. <p>

<p>

She was wrong.

> He remembered every single detail. Their conversation, her smile and his voice. <p>

Everything.

> Cloud slowly returned from his sleep, feeling groggy with this unusual experience. Also, he was sweating. The beating of his heart had not slowed down. Sitting up on the hard mattress that was supplied by Gongaga inn, Cloud noticed his friends standing.

> Tifa and Barret were beside him, looking down with worried expression on their faces. Cloud sensed another concern that was beside himself. <p>

> Tifa stepped up. Cloud, Aeris is gone. She said, her face troubled. <p>

> Something in Cloud's heart died then. The news didn't surprise him. But the confirmation of what his dream has predicted killed something in his heart. Perhaps it was his hope. Perhaps it was his faith. It didn't matter. It had already happened. Tifa didn't seem to sense the tremor going under his skin. She coughed. I was just wondering, Cloud. I was just thinkingâ€" <p>

> Quit beating around the bushes, Tifa. Just say itâ€"

> Do you think her running away is somehow related to that act you did â€"to her? <p>

> Barret shook his head. For the first time, he didn't have that tough look. He seemed genuinely concerned. We are not blamin' you or anythin', Cloud. Jes wonderin', that's all. <p>

There you go again, Barret, forgetting your ing' word.

Barret, he knows that! You don't have to give him any ideas.

Swell, and you were being so subtle, huh?

> <p>

Hell, I know that, Tifa! Don't patronize me.

Cloud couldn't take it anymore. He grabbed his head. She's gone â€"to take on Sephiroth. He moaned.

Both of them stopped. Tifa gasped.

> She's in the Sleeping Forest. Up North.
 And how'd you know that? Barret asked, skeptical. Cloud didn't blame him. She came into my dream.

> Tifa asked in disbelief. She came into your dream? Are you sure?
<p>

> She said I probably won't remember. But I do. I'm sure, Tifa. Cloud lowered his head. Sephiroth's after her, too.
 Barret shook both his fists in the air with the impatience. Then what the hell's the problem? Let's go to that damn Sleeping Forest!
> Tifa looked at Cloud. A fresh concern was spreading across her pretty face. Are you okay, Cloud? She asked. <p>

No

An answer was better than nothing, she must have decided. Tifa didn't probe for more elaboration. She merely straightened herself.

Shouldn't we be going?

>
 Cloud suddenly felt like going back to bed. I don't know. He murmured. Barret stopped his usual rampage and stared at him. What's that? You aren't goin'? Did Aeris hit you on the head in that dream of yours?

> Cloud, what's wrongâ€" Tifa implored.

> Cloud clutched his head and shook it vigorously. The ringing in his head the fear in his heart was more than he could bear. He wished Aeris would give up on whatever she was intending to do. He hoped she was standing right outside the room, flashing her usual smile, giving her usual glint of intelligence in that pure green eyes <p>

> A part of him desired to go. A desire to save her before it's too late But the desire of withdrawal was as much as his former desire. A desire to run away- an unthinkable consequence if he did otherwise
<p>

> He feared for her safety.

> And he remembered the slip of paper he had taken out from the fortune telling machine that Aeris had urged him to take. It costed him 200 gil but seeing Aeris happy after getting the rectangular piece of paper had satisfied him somehow. He had managed to read the passage over her shoulder. A brief message. <p>

> What you pursue will be yours. But you'll lose something dear.

> A message he had scoffed at. Why'd it have to come back alive now? And Aeris, she was gone already

> I'm â€"I'm scared, Tifa. He managed to utter. His strained voice was enough to shake Tifa. Whatever happened to her old Cloud? Where was his cocky manner and where was that over-confident smile of his that he usually flashed to her? She didn't recognize the guy sitting in front of her.

> Barret was disgusted. Whadd'ya mean yer scared, Cloud? He thundered. His voice seemed to shake the whole inn. Ignoring him, Tifa knelt in front of Cloud and looked into his face. He refused to make eye contact with her, which hurt, but she had always been used to his evasiveness.

> She began carefully. I know you'd lost your self control before and nearly killed Aeris, but you've got to stop this self-torment. It's

not your fault that you can't keep control over your own self! <p>

> I know, Tifa, but, when he's near, I, Iâ€" Cloud sputtered. I feel like I am losing myself. He hung his head, which was quite pitiful. It took her everything she owned to keep herself from madly hugging him and bursting into tears at the same time. With a slight lump in her throat, Tifa gulped. <p>

> So much had happened so fast she no longer felt like he was her friend. Perhaps this was meant to be. Perhaps this was her destiny. She wasn't sure and she swore not to let go until she find out what it meant exactly.
 Barret was nudging Tifa from the back. Looking back, she understood what he was saying.

> Leave him alone for a while. He'll come to his senses. His eyes were saying. _

> But

>
 Sighing, Tifa stood up. Cloud made no move to stop her. He just sat there with his whole features slumped like a broken man losing his will to live. A man about to crumble down and disappear. With a last worried glance at him, Tifa left the room and joined Barret outside. He was lost deep in thought, standing there with his hands on his waist.

> Well, did he say something? He asked slowly. Tifa shook her head miserable. Only the last thing you heard him say. Barret, I'm worried. <p>

About Aeris or about Cloud?

> Tifa looked at him quickly. You are not giving me an easy question, Barret. What's your point? <p>

Barret shrugged. I'm saying he'll come to his senses soon enough. It's you I'm worried. This whole mess and on top of it all, you'reâ€"

I am what? Tifa challenged, putting her hands on her hip and facing Barret directly.

Barret tightened his face; the usual expression when he was about to give anybody a hard lecture. And now, he had that look on his face.

>I ain't saying it's wrong but Tifa, you've changed! Ever since that freak came into our group, you've been chasing him here and there like a newly found lost puppy. And it gets on my nerve. All you do is stare at him or sigh or act like a damn school girl!<p>

Tifa's face flushed red but quickly got a hold of herself.

Well, I hadn't seen him for such a long time! Wouldn't you do the same, Barret? Oh, what about that LADY down the road who went away and came back. Weren't you always trying to talk to her and stuff??

It was Barret's time to flush. Barret quickly opened his mouth to defend himself when his words were cut off by the opening sound of the inn door. Both of them spun around.

Tifa cried in relief. Are you all right?

Cloud looked different. The moment of crisis had washed away from his face. The drooping shoulders were back on its place and his eyes were again penetrating. Whatever solution or comfort he found while pondering what to do with himself, he must have decided not to think about it that much. He was definitely back to normal. Her question was answered by a resolute nod of that spiky head of his. Barret seemed relieved to have him back. Obviously, he didn't have much faith in his own affirmation about Cloud's condition.

It was evident on his face that he was glad it turned out okay. Now, what should we do? He asked as usual.

Aeris is alone by herself. Cloud said, looking across at Tifa and Barret. And Sephiroth is after her. Whatever he wants to do to her, it's not going to be a pretty sight. I'm pretty sure she is unaware of the gravity of the situation.

We must act quick, you're saying. Tifa finished. Cloud glanced at the place where Aeris was standing after when she heard about the news of her old boyfriend, Zack.

_X marks the spot. _Tifa thought dryly. Obviously, he was thinking about Aeris. She prompted, annoyed that he hadn't answered her question. Cloud shook his head. Sorry. I was just thinking about what Aeris had said.

The path starts from here.

I'm not sure what it meant

I was just praying and I felt like talking to you

But what?

I wanted to see you before I go

Barret was impatient to get started. Let's go to that damn forest! She could be in danger right now, ya know?

Cloud nodded. You're right, Barret. Let's go.

Before they headed out, Cloud looked back at the place one last time. Aeris's voice seemed to be carried in the wind as it blew from the horizon and tickled Cloud's nose. The soft breeze, the warmth that he felt

I really enjoyed that date, Cloud

Please wait up for me, Aeris. Cloud murmured, reminiscing the smile Aeris had flashed before she went away.

The sleeping forest was not hard to find.

After steering the Tiny Bronco due North, they encountered a remote island with small beach landing site. The place seemed deserted. When

they made a landing, Barret pointed out the forest near the beach. That seems like the forest you saw in your dream, Cloud. Cloud merely nodded.

>
 Yuffie was busy complaining about her sore legs and RedXIII was keeping her piped down. But look at this place! I don't care if Aeris is in there! I'm staying here! When Tifa and Cloud looked at her, she gave a stubborn pout. I'm serious.

> RedXIII looked at Cloud with rueful smile. I'd better stay in case Yuffie tries to drown herself of boredom.

> Barret glanced at the forest. I'm going. At least, I want to go. He said. Cloud remembered how he had acted the first time they started to work as a team. How he had ignored him and how Barret tried to show that I-AM-THE-BOSS-AROUND-HERE look. Cloud couldn't remember the last time Barret tried to show that. He had changed. And so did Cloud. <p>

> Tifa quietly brushed her front hair back. I'm going too. She said serenely. Cloud nodded. Okay. I think the rest of you should stay back in case something comes up. <p>

> The rest nodded in agreement. Only Yuffie seemed overjoyed to stay behind. Vincent showed no emotion to the situation. Cloud still had a lot to learn from that mysterious man in red cape. <p>

Cid threw his cigar in the water. Go ahead. And stay alert.

The forest did not open right away as Cloud and others had anticipated. First of all, there were dozen people digging up the place and making hell of a noise with the small bomb they inserted into the ground before they all hid themselves and finally pressing the small remote control and blow up the area. The blowup was actually not visible to them. Just a little rumbling on the ground and it was over.

Over the shouts of the gruff looking men, Cloud glanced through the blinding dust that made his eyes itch for any sign of pink robe or a glimpse of brown hair, but he couldn't.

His eyes settled on a fat man standing with his arms akimbo. He seemed like a person in charge of this place. Cloud walked over to him.

What are they doing? He asked. A little bit surprised, man looked over at him.

Dust covered face with fat belly. He probably worked out a lot. He had a thick red tan down till his neck and the only sign that he washed himself was his face. Other place, well, they were not so clean. The man looked at Cloud in a single, yet scrutinizing way that showed his suspicion. Why wouldn't he be? He was not dressed normal. Plus the huge sword at his back This time, he had changed it into Yoshiyuki, the sword he got from that weird man from the rocket town. It was intimidating.

>
 Cloud shifted his weight on his right leg.

I doubt there's going to be any chance for a trees to grow if there are such commotion going on around like this. He commented.

The man didn't flinch. He wasn't scared easily. You from the company or what? He asked. Cloud shook his head. No. What are they doing? He asked again. The man sighed and pointed to the huge dragonhead that was near the site. That's out latest excavation. We use the latest excavation system to make our work more efficient and more effective. He shifted his finger towards the men working under the glaring sun with sweat pouring down their faces. They are my men, in case you didn't notice. They set the bomb underground and detonate them. After the massive explosion underneath the earth's surface, you will be able to acquire the various treasures hidden beneath.

He rubbed his scrubby hands together when he glanced at Cloud again. Course, we can help you dig some stuff if you want, "for a price, that is. You interested?

>
 Cloud shook his head. Later. But I'm looking for a friend. She's "

> By any chance wearing a pink skirt and has long brown hair? The man interrupted. Cloud couldn't resist his relieved smile. Yeah, is she here right now? His smile faded when the man shook his head.

> She came around before you guys arrived here, sayin' she has to go into that forest. He pointed towards the far north where the trees had started to grow. There was a small opening among the bushes. She went in there. Tried to stop her, but she insisted to be allowed to go in. Quite persistent, that woman. The man coughed. Cloud turned back to his friends. We have to follow her. He said firmly.

> Tifa looked at the entrance of the forest with worried expression. Are you sure, Cloud? That Aeris is there? That Aeris spoke to you in that dream in this very place?
 You seem uncertain? Cloud looked keenly across at Tifa.

Hard gaze, deep set blue eye. Tifa gulped. She sensed displeasure in them. His eyes didn't stay long. He started to turn. Then stay. I'm going in whatever happens. I don't care.

>
 He made his way in the other direction, towards the forest. The man standing next to Tifa yelled at him. Hey, be careful there, son! They say a monster lives there! Kjata or something!

> Tifa turned to Barret. I am in doubt. But I wasn't doubting Cloud. You understand, Barret, don't you?

> Barret shrugged. At this point, I don't think I should be the judge. He started to follow Cloud, whom didn't glance back to check if they were following. Trust your heart, Tifa. But I advise you not to hassle Cloud about it. He's already on the edge because of Aeris.

> Tifa stared after Barret. And her eyes shifted to Cloud. Then the entrance of the forest, where Aeris is, at this very moment. <p>

She was trouble from the beginning. And Cloud, he "he wanted to protect her from the beginning

Tifa glared at the fat man leering at her and started to follow the guys.

The altar, from where she stood, held breathtaking scenery. Aeris stood there with wide eyes. The water that shimmered from below reflected in her eyes, making her green eyes glow. She took a deep breath. The air was quite stuffy and a bit warm, but there was definitely an air of Holy in the place.

The sacred atmosphere. The unimaginable power beneath.

The era of Ancient "her race

Aeris leaned on the fence that surrounded the small altar. She leaned her head back and looked at the sky that was visible through the small hole on the ceiling of the snail house.

>
 She felt like she was at home. Home with her resilient flowers and her mom, Elmyra. The warm air surrounded her whole body like a soft feelings she always felt when she held on to her white materia. The place felt quite familiar to her, even though she had never been to this place. Her heartbeat refused to slow down even though she had walked to get to this place. Aeris felt excited as if something's going to happen here.

>
 Aeris straightened herself. No time for daydreaming. She reminded herself softly. Cloud would be here any moment. She had told him that she would be here, but she had given him the benefit of doubt that he wouldn't remember her words. Knowing him, he would already be near the entrance of the forest with his friends.

>
 God knows how he could remember, but he would. Aeris was sure. He always knew. Every detail.

> She allowed herself to reminisce the time when they had mounted the gondola together. He hadn't resisted when she suggested the ride, but then, the moment they stepped in and closed the door, there was absolutely nothing to say to each other. She had avoided his gaze with her arms resting on the windowsill so she didn't get to know where he was looking, whether he was bored out of his head or enjoying himself. The air had suddenly become uncomfortable and in the corner of her eyes, she felt that Cloud glanced at her several times. But they shared the fantastic view of the Gold Saucer together and that was enough. For her.

> Aeris knew she was being too pushy, too outspoken to him. Maybe too much. She knew Tifa was annoyed at her several times because of that. Thinking of Tifa put different thoughts into her head. The girl was a mystery. She was funny, beautiful and an old friend of Cloud, but she refused to accept the fact that she liked Cloud, just like Aeris felt for him. Several times, Aeris caught her staring at him. Several times, Aeris noticed the sigh that escaped out of her mouth. Yet, when Aeris pinpointed that out in open, she immediately jumped and denied that she even did those acts. <p>

> And Cloud "Cloud was indifferent to the whole situation. Sometimes, Aeris wondered what their relations were. She sometimes got the feeling that whenever Cloud looked at Tifa, he had always been trying to squeeze something out of his brain. As if to remember something. Maybe it was love. Maybe he loved Tifa. <p>

> Aeris sighed. She was an Ancient. She had a mission when she came to this world. And that time has come and here she was, thinking and pondering about something as corny as love. But she was a human being, aside from the fact that she was a different human. She needed

love, just like everyone else!
 But every time she fell in love, it was someone tied inevitably to the hands of fate.

Like Tseng.

_ Like Zack._

Aeris sighed and slowly kneeled on the hard floor of the altar. She closed her eyes and briefly let out a breath.

_Like Cloud
> Especially Cloud

_She was there. Right below his feet.
> When she looked up, she failed to see through the air, through the atmosphere, to recognize him standing only a few feet up in the air, breathing the same air as her.
 She didn't know.
> She didn't feel.
 She was as ignorant as when he saw her at the Temple of Ancient. Just looking forward, never looking back
> Still thinking about Cloud
 He didn't like her. Cloud could never care for anybody. He couldn't possible. How could he â€"a mere shadow of his self?
> Yet, she cared for him. Even now, when her own life was in danger and the whole planet depended on her prayer, she thought of him.
 Pathetic excuse for an Ancient.
> Not like himself.

I can hear Aeris's voice Cloud murmured.

He sat up on his bed and groggily looked around. Next to his bed, Barret groaned. Tifa, on the far corner of the room, got up at his voice.
> He didn't hear her. He stood up with his ears strained. He mumbled. Tifa slowly stood up and nudged Barret who was snoring quite loud. Barret stirred. Huh? What's goin' on, Tifa?
 Tifa shushed him and pointed at Cloud.

Look.

Barret glanced at Cloud standing on the middle of the small room of the City of Ancient and his eyes widened. Cloud? What's wrong? He asked. At first, Cloud stood with dazed expression on his face. But then, he jerked his face towards them. I can hear Aeris talking! He exclaimed. Tifa rubbed her tired eyes. But, Cloud, we had searched everywhere. The forest and this City of Ancient, too. There was no Aeris, remember?
>
 Cloud firmly shook his head. No, I can hear her voice. She'sâ€" He briefly closed his eyes. â€"she's praying
> Barret groaned again. This is spooky, Cloud. And why the hell Aeris can only be heard â€"or seen- by only you? He asked, annoyed.
<p>

Tifa stiffened at the comment.

_Trueâ€" _Tifa chewed on that for a moment meaningfully. _Very trueâ€"_

>
 Cloud shook his head. I don't know. Then, he started to climb the ladder that leads to downstairs and outside. It was already dark. The sun had set. Tifa wondered where Cloud is thinking of going. Cloud! Where are you going?

>
 Cloud was already opening the front door. Out. To Aeris. He responded shortly. And he was gone.

_Due North _Cloud calculated. _It's not far It's very near very_

> Where was he going? To where?

> To Aeris? To Sephiroth?

> Cloud had absolutely no idea what's going to happen once he find Aeris. She was silently praying, her soft voices surprisingly articulate in his head.

> She's calling to Holy

>
 Cloud's heartbeat quickened. Aeris was way ahead of him. She always had been and now, she was putting herself in danger because of him.

> Sephiroth was near. Cloud was certain about that, too. And Aeris she was in danger!

> Cloud gasped for breath. He hadn't realized that he was running around like a lunatic. The place was dark and empty, the beautiful shell houses all gloomy among the darkness. He didn't know where he was heading. He didn't know what he was expecting. But, he could feel his instinct arousing his every nerve to go to that place.
 At last, Cloud reached the far northern part of the city where there was small clear pond in front of the small shell house. The voice was near.

>
 Cloud entered the small shell house and to his surprise, he found the opening in the midst of the small room. A large fish statue that had look so real had blocked it. But now, there were small leading stairs that seemed to go down. Cloud took the stairs without further hesitation.

>
 The stairs seemed to last forever. The transparent stairs made Cloud almost lose balance and fall headlong down the small house underneath. It coiled downward like a back of a huge python and led further down. Cloud took two steps at a time. He wasn't afraid anymore.

>
 He had to find Aeris. And the voice was very near, as if Aeris was whispering right beside his ears.

> Cloud was quite breathless when he reached the end of the stairs. In fact, he was gasping for air. His heart seemed to jump out of the throat as he tried to slow down his breath. Then he realized the special atmosphere of the place. It had a glint â€"yes, a glow around the place. It felt comfortable and very precious. It softened Cloud's heart as he glanced around to feel it around him. It almost felt real.

> Then he saw her.

>
 She was kneeled on the middle of the small altar. Her eyes were closed, her hands clasped together and her lips moving in a gentle murmur of her prayer. She seemed absolutely oblivious to his presence and she didn't look up when he took a step towards her. Then, he heard running footsteps behind him that halted only a few

feet away from him.

>
 He heard Tifa exclaim in disbelief. Barret stopped her when she tried to follow Cloud onto the altar. When she looked at Barret questioningly, Barret shook his head.

Leave them alone for a while.

Of course, Tifa knew Cloud wanted to talk to Aeris alone. But

Cloud mounted the round supports that connected the altar to where he stood. Beneath his feet, Cloud realized that the clear pond water was somehow connected to the clear water he was seeing now.

>
 He reached the altar and stood still. Aeris still showed no sign of recognition. Her prayer, her closed eye lids and her solemn expression Cloud realized how precious each element was. She was praying for the planet. How she knew the way, Cloud had no idea, but he felt frustrated that she had not told him, nor did she tried to discuss it with him before running off to this remote place. Obviously, Aeris didn't care or she was quite selfish to make him or his friends suffer.

>
 Then, suddenly, Cloud heard someone's voice.

>
 _Well, it's about time you showed up

> Huh?
 We've got to stop her soon

> You again Sephiroth? What are you
 Wake up!_

>
 So many words flashed through his head. So many unspoken, yet clearly understood words all passed right through Cloud's head as he stared down at Aeris praying.

>
 The time seemed to stop. The flapping of the gentle sound of the water ceased. No sound was heard except for the hammering of his own heart. The ringing inside him seemed to get louder as Cloud grabbed the side of his head and shook it to make the voice go away.

>
 _You know you can do it, Cloud

> Stop, STOP!!
 You don't have any choice and you know it

> What are you saying? That I should?
 That's right be a good boy, Cloud_

>
 Cloud's whole body shook as he tried desperately to get a control of himself. His body slumped forward and shook his head violently as if he was in too much pain.

>
 _Please Aeris

> You can't do otherwise now, be a good boy
 I can't hold on much longer

> CLOUD! DO IT!
 RUN!!!_

>
 Tifa and Barret watched in silent horror as Cloud suddenly bolted upright from his position. Frantically, Barret started to hurry on the altar.

>
 With the sound of his shaky breath from the struggle he went through, Cloud drew his sword from the back in a single motion. Still, the voice was throbbing through his mind like a razorblade.

>
 _That's it cloud

> Aeris

>
 Cloud slowly adjusted his sword. Tifa screamed. Barret almost went out of his mind. He yelled, running up to the altar.

>
 No, too late

>
 He poised his huge sword at Aeris's head. A few seconds seemed to pass as Cloud stared at Aeris with empty and cold eyes. Tifa's cries didn't bring his mind back to focus.

>
 His mako eyes flashed.

>
 The sword cut through the air in a single motion. That moment,

Aeris opened her eyes. Her eyes widened for a brief moment. She didn't have a chance to shout for help.
> Tifa screamed.

> Please, Cloud, you don't know what you are doing!
>
 Cloud! Stop!!!
>
 Good boy
>
 Barret finally reached Cloud when he brought it down. Without thinking, Barret banged the back of Cloud's head with his gunarm. The metal sent Cloud lose his grip on his sword.
>
 The sword fell next to Aeris with a loud clash.
>
 _Aeris _
>
 Last word he uttered before he fell face down, on top of terrified Aeris.
>
 I'm sorry

2. Default Chapter Title

The Revolution: Chapter Two The Revolution -Final Fantasy 7
> Part One: The Slumber

> Chapter Two
> By L u f i a<a>
>
 One thing good about RedXIII was that no explanation was needed when he was around.

After seeing Cloud hunched up on Barret's shoulder, he silently nodded and shushed everyone else on the Tiny Bronco who would have made a big fuss otherwise. Tifa was very much thankful for the quiet ride towards the nearest town, Kalm.

Aeris had fainted as Cloud brought down his sword on her head. Fortunately, Barret had reached Cloud and hit him hard on the head with his gun arm before he could have inflicted a severe damage on Aeris. Tifa shuddered at the memory.

>
 Barret didn't say a word during the ride home, either. He avoided eye contact with anyone and after dumping Cloud onto the plane; he just sat on one corner and refused to speak.

>
 Tifa was the one who held onto Aeris. She was a bit surprised at the lightness of her weight as she carried the fragile body towards the plane.

>
 The men working near the forest had all stared at them when they came out.

>
 Personal problem, or should I give ya a hand? He had asked. Barret grunted his answer no.

>
 Yuffie almost burst into tears when she saw Cloud in his disheveled state. She had whined that it was all her fault. RedXIII quieted her down.

> You found Aeris. He said with those meaningful intelligent eyes that always told you he knew. Tifa nodded. RedXIII turned his head away from Aeris. What a mess.
 He must have known. Tifa didn't ask why he thought it was a mess. She figured he'd already know. And he did, too.

>
 Back in town, Barret helped Tifa carry both Aeris and Cloud to the inn. The innkeeper, who was already familiar with the group, widened her eyes when she saw the two people with closed eyelids. Just make sure it's not contagious. She said generously.

>
 Two beds were immediately made. Putting both under the cover, Tifa felt close to tears. I just don't get it Barret. She whispered.

How can this be happening? I just hope Aeris don't remember that Cloud had tried to kill her with his own hands.

> Barret sighed. He hadn't said anything during the ride. But in that silence, his mind seemed fully focused as if to think of something that would stop this maddening situation. His brows knotted together more deeply each time Tifa glanced his way. Tifa had wondered how he was taking the whole situation. Cloud wasn't himself again. That's it. It's not such a devastating situation at hand!
 But you saw it! Tifa almost yelled, tears of frustration forming on the corner of her eyes. You saw it with your own eyes! How he lifted his sword and â€œ

>
 You two mind talking outside?

>
 A firm voice interrupted behind them. Quickly, both of them turned around to see RedXIII standing on top of the staircase. He shook his head. Those two had a rough day tonight. They need their rest, you understand?

>
 Tifa flushed and wiped the tears off her eyes. Yeah, you're right, RedXIII. With that, she stalked out of the room and down the stairs. RedXIII wasn't a fool. He sighed when he glanced at Barret standing with his head hung low. I understand how you must feel. But don't let your frustration sprayed on Tifa just because she isn't worried about Aeris as much as she is worrying about Cloud. She have her reasons, remember?

> Barret looked at the two figures on the bed; from pale-faced Aeris to the solemn face of Cloud. I remember. Tifa is â€œ
 â€œHaving a hard time of her own. Let her be. Right now, we have to think about waking up the two. RedXIII interrupted softly. Barret raised an eyebrow in surprise. Whadd'ya mean wake the two'? Ain't they gonna wake up on their own?

> His question was answered by a slow, sad shake on the intelligent head of the animal.

> RedXIII said. We have to figure out how to wake them up from their sleep. Their soul is still lingering at the City of Ancient.<p>

_Shouldn't have overlooked them Barret Tifa

> Maybe I should have taken care of them myself my deepest regret

 I shouldn't have trusted a

>
 Sephiroth stood with his body up in the air. He watched the whole scene. He saw how Cloud stared at Aeris, with his mind fully focused on Aeris. That was the perfect chance to control his mind. When his mind was full of something, it was easier to make that thought a target of his action. Fortunately, Cloud was thinking about Aeris.

>
 Hmmm, this is getting interesting Sephiroth mused, glancing around at the City of Ancient.

>
 He hadn't made any appearance when that big black guy and black-haired woman took Cloud and Aeris away.

> He didn't want to show himself, the holy person, in front of mere pathetic humans. They were all sentenced death in his book. And further more, they would try to attack him that would be fatal in the world of Ancient. He would be subjected to scarring the holy place and he would be condemned from calling out the black materia. Of course, he had his jenova cell' with him. It would fight for him. But he had discovered something interesting.

> Hmmm?
 Sephiroth's eyes focused on the small materia lying on the white floor of the altar.

> It was different from the ones the pathetic humans carried on their

weapons. This one was glowing in light green. A very pale green.
 Sephiroth landed on the altar in an instant and with a single wisp of his right hand, he placed the weird materia into his palm.
> Hmmm, very interesting

> This was his lucky day
 The very materia he had wanted to get his hands on
> It was his for good.

The last thing Aeris remembered was Cloud's tortured face. The dark glimmer in his bright blue eyes as he brought down his sword at â€

>
 Me.
>
 Aeris slowly stood up from the floor.
>
 Where am I?
> The place seemed quite familiar. Then it came to her.

> Oh, that's right the City of Ancient
>
 She was still at the City of Ancient. Where she had last been, praying and silently pondering about the planet. The altar looked the same, and the gentle movement of the water below and the soft atmosphere of the place were all the same as she had seen it last time she was here.
>
 But where was everyone else?
> Aeris tried to remember. She had been praying that she could remember clearly, but what happened after Tifa screamed and Cloud brought down his sword at her was all a blur to her.

> What happened? She murmured, squinting through the misty air of the place. No, she was wrong. Something was definitely wrong. Something vital and important. A sudden headache on her forehead made Aeris wonder whether Cloud had somehow inflicted some damage on her. Did he? She was not so sure. Where is everybody? Why am I alone<p>

> Aeris felt a wisp of cold air pass by her side.

> Opaque atmosphere felt cold. Very cold
 ...I gotta figure out what am I doing here quick Aeris murmured and brushed her front hair aside. Or else, I'll be staying here forever.
>
 Aeris flopped off the alter and made her way over the staircase. If she remembered correctly, the atmosphere of the city wasn't so cold. Now, it felt like sharp edges of ice. Aeris slightly shivered. The air had grown thick and quite suffocating. The place seemed empty and hollow like a cave made out of iceberg, yet Aeris could feel the air tightening around her body.
>
 Aeris reached the top of the staircase.
> Something was different. Aeris got out of the small shell house and glanced about.
 She weakly called out. are you here, Cloud?
> Just sharp gushing wind answered her calls. Frustrated, Aeris tried to calm herself. She was used to dangers. She had always been ready to step forth on her own. She wasn't afraid of being alone. She was strong and

> Noyou are not strong
> Aeris felt her eyes moisten.
 Meeting Cloud knowing him getting to know each other all these things made her realize how weak herself was how much she was pretending to the others
> Aeris' legs gave away under her. She flopped down; her legs folded and stared ahead with vacant expression.
 Now that she realized how much she had enjoyed and gotten used to companionship with her

friends, Aeris wasn't sure she could get out of this danger alone.

>
 I am scared, Cloud She murmured, unable to stop the tears from streaming down. I don't want to be alone by myself now
> Then, sudden dizziness hit her head. The place seemed like swerving in ugly circle in front of her eyes. Then, she collapsed on the cold ground.

> She didn't hear the distant howl of the wild beasts nearby as the darkness slowly misted over her eyes.
<p>

Cloud jerked his head up. He thought he was in pain. No, he thought someone else he knows was in pain.

>
 Where did I get that sensation?
> Slowly, Cloud shook his head and tried to clear it. He felt quite groggy as if he had been drinking. The muscle in the back of his neck felt strained and side of his forehead burned.

> What happened?
>
 Cloud tried to focus his vision. For a moment, he felt with a pang that he had gone blind. But, as the surrounding slowly adjusted itself in his eyes, he relaxed.
>
 Wait a minute
> Cloud quickly got up from his position. The disturbing sensation crept back at the pit of his stomach as he looked around the place. His heartbeat quickened.

> Isis this where I had been last?
>
 There was no mistake in what he was seeing. It was the city of Ancient all right but something has definitely changed. The deserted place seemed almost lively.
>
 Aeris? Barret? Tifa? Cloud feebly called out, deciding to find his friends first. He took a step forward. Where is everyone? He wondered, glancing around once more.
>
 How'd he get here? The last place he had been was the altar with Aeris. Whatever the reason, he was no longer there. He was standing alone in the sleeping forest. The thick trees looked down at him. The vast sky peeked in at him over their heads. Sighing, Cloud leaned on one of the trees and tried to sort through his mind.
> He couldn't understand what was going on nor did he comprehend the disappearance of his friends.

> Am I being too paranoid or is someone watching me?
>
 Cloud looked around. He certainly felt like someone was there, among those dark hovering trees.
>
 No, I am being ridiculous.
> But his instinct as SOLDIER kicked in his blood, making him realize that there was indeed someone else other than himself.
 And it didn't feel like friendly one. A hostile creature. It felt like numerous monsters he fought before.
>
 Suddenly, a sudden light burst right in front of him, knocking him down to the ground. He was being attacked!
>
 Cloud quickly leapt to his feet and drew his huge sword in a single motion.
>
 Another lightening flashed. Cloud was far more ready than last time.
> To the right! His head screamed.
> Cloud dodged the light in a nick of time, falling to the ground in the process. What the hell is going around here? Cloud cried, bracing himself from yet another blow. This was insane! Whoever it is, they

were attacking like crazy, obviously thinking he is the enemy.

> He posed himself to get up. At this rate, it was just matter of time before he meet his doom. Gripping his sword, he looked up.
 His heart froze. His eyes widened.

> His eyes traveled further and further up until his neck couldn't take it anymore.

> It was obvious that he missed to notice the assailant because he failed to realize that the giant trees standing around him was â€œalive.
 They were not only alive but they were also attacking him!

>
 It said in authoritative, yet inhuman voice, as Cloud looked around at the trees surrounding him. His heartbeat tripled.

> [YOU ARE TO BE ELIMINATED. YOU WILL NOT LEAVE THIS PLACE UNLESS YOU ARE ELIMINATED AS DUST

<p>

Reno took out a cigarette box from his pocket. The pack was empty. In disgust, he threw the annoying thing on the ground and looked around him. Elena and Rude, seated across from him, didn't budge.

> They were inside the Shinra building. It was the president's summon.
 The room was empty except for themselves. The body of Tseng was found in the Temple of Ancient and now, he would only be recorded in Shinra's book of employee. Nothing more. No funeral or ceremony. Tseng would only recorded as a man working for the Shinra.

> Reno glanced at Elena. Despite the fact that her love has disappeared, she didn't throw any emotional tantrum that kind of amazed him.
 Elena was one of them, but Reno had a little faith in her as a member. Unlike others, Elena still had a soft side on her, which was fatal drawback as the Turks. Tseng had said he'd have to see for himself what she could accomplish as the Turks. But now that he's dead, Reno would never be able to comprehend what Tseng meant or thought of her.

> It didn't matter either. Their leader was dead. Shinra wouldn't care or hold responsible for his death. Witnessing death must be common to them so they wouldn't mind seeing another one. Of course, Reno was used to it to. But not someone close to him. Someone he respected and admired of.
 Reno looked at Rude. As usual, Rude showed absolutely NO trauma in his feature. It might have been because of his dark sunglasses covered most of his face. Reno doubted that he would feel sorry for Tseng.

> Finally, someone opened the door.
 I can hardly believe that the Turks would mourn for somebody. Rufus mocked, stepping inside. The three Turks stood up slowly.

> Quite bold, Reno remarked with a bitter smile. We could have ripped you apart then and there, right on that spot.
 Rufus raised one eyebrow. Killing me isn't a solution to Tseng's death. He was just unlucky.

> How nice of you. Elena said coldly. But it sounds ironic, coming outta your mouth.
 I didn't come here to lick your sad little wound. Rufus replied, giving a stone cold stare. My coming here is strictly business.

> What makes you think that we'll work under you again after what you put Tseng through? Reno growled. Rufus waved his hand. I don't want to make any excuse. What's done is done. Shinra can't take responsibility for every little death. He looked across at them keenly. Besides, I thought the Turks could take care of themselves.

Was I wrong? Did you need a babysitter?
 Reno lunged forward but Rude quickly held him back. Rufus was amused. I take that as a He slowly advanced the three. And I believe that you won't let his death go by meaninglessly. He continued in a smooth voice.

> Elena crossed her arms across her chest. What do you mean?
 Rufus started to circle the room. What if it wasn't MY fault? Tseng certainly wasn't a careless guy. I know that man. He pointed out. What if he was attacked by far more skilled people? Don't you want to avenge him? In other words, Rufus' cool green eyes met with Reno's. Rather than putting meaningless blame on me, don't you think you should put it on somewhat more likely individual whom you can take your revenge? Hmm?

> Rude released Reno. Straightening his jacket, Reno looked straight at Rufus. What's your game this time? He asked cautiously.
 Rufus' face broke into an evil grin. Get the Ancient. This will be your last mission if it goes well.

Red XIII slowly came down the stairs of the inn. The rest of the group was waiting by at the bottom of the stairs.

>
 Tifa quickly advanced forward. She prompted.

>
 Red XIII shrugged a little. As I said before, it isn't a normal slumber. I checked their eyelids. Both of them certainly are not taking a light snooze, I can say that much. He slowly looked around. If it goes like this, they might never be able to locate their body. They might never wake up. He said gravely.

>
 Tifa sucked in her breath. I don't know what you are saying, Red. What is going on? She asked in a trembling voice. Nothing happened back there. If there was a problem, it was on Cloud. He had lost his control again. But how come Aeris is in that state too?

>
 Barret put his hand on her shoulder to calm her but she shook it off. Tell me! She cried.

>

> No, I won't stop! Tifa shouted, unable to stop the tears. It feels almost like years now! I was always afraid that this kind of thing would happen. When I am with Cloud, I was always afraid. She said in deep emotion. Her lips were trembling. I was always afraid that he would run away, leave me behind and never return! Sure, I laugh and I talk jokes and stuff, but you don't know what I always had in my heart! Yuffie and Cid lowered their heads.

> To me, it's like having a bomb at the pit of my stomach Tifa wailed, her voice caught in her throat. It's like a bomb continuing to tick

> Tifa's voice trailed off, leaving the hollowness behind. She slowly started to weep softly, covering her face.

> Everyone stood there, unable to move, unable to speak. As much as seeing Tifa like this for the first time, they didn't know how to console her or approach her.

> and goes kaboom', huh? Someone spoke up softly. Surprised, Tifa jerked her tear stricken face towards the speaker. Everyone turned to the direction of the voice. Vincent seemed perfectly at ease even when the situation was quite hopeless.

> What? Were you expecting something less dramatic? He asked, his piercing eyes focused on Tifa.

> There was no ridiculing in his voice. It was just a deep voice that somehow calmed the hearts of people. Since it was him who spoke up, everyone was quite amazed and therefore, remained silent.
 If

that's the situation, then I advice you to let it explode. He continued. His sharp gaze faltered for a while. But not now. It's not over yet. At least, not in my book.

>
 Barret felt a little foam of hope building inside. You mean you know the way to bring them back?

> Vincent shook his head. I don't know it.

> The foam sizzled off.

> Yuffie pouted. Then why are you acting so big?
 Vincent regarded her in an odd expression. Because I know where to start looking. He said.

Something wet and warm brushed by her cheeks.

> Aeris stirred slightly, not knowing what that thing was. Again, it sniffed her hair, her neck and her jacket. It gave a disdainful scoff and growled.

> Aeris moaned a little. The sniffing ceased and seemed to take a step back. Then, slowly, it advanced forward and began to sniff around again.

> Slowly, Aeris opened her eyes. Her eyes first focused on the starry night sky. She heard the soft crackling of burning of woods nearby and finally, her gaze settled on something dark that had two menacing eyes. Seeing that she had woken up, it stared at her a moment before giving a loud bark at her.

> Almost leaping out of her skin, Aeris cried, bracing herself.

> Heel, Kappi. Heel. Came a gentle, but firm voice. Immediately, the animal ceased the barking and trotted away towards the voice.

> Calming herself, Aeris' eyes followed the middle-sized dog and her eyes fell on some figure sitting next to the fireplace. Her eyes traveled upwards until she was met with cool gray eyes of total stranger.

> The man gave a slight grin when their eyes met. So, you've finally decided to live after all? He asked, rubbing the dog affectionately.

> Aeris didn't say anything for a moment, studying his features. His straight red hair tied behind, the man had a soft gray eyes and sharp nose. He looked around twenty and wore a black jacket and heavy-looking army boots. He had a bandaged left hand and the other, gloved. A sharp looking sword rested on the ground beside him and small backpack near it.

> Aeris suddenly realized that she was staring and averted her gaze away in embarrassment. She replied. She started to sit up but the dog gave another fierce bark towards her, forcing her to lie down. The man gave a light chuckle. I think he's saying you shouldn't move for a while. He said.

> I've noticed. Aeris muttered with a slight shudder. He glanced at the dog with warmth. This is Kappi, my loyal companion. He introduced. Then he turned to her. And I am called Lance. Pleased to make your acquaintance.

> I am Aeris. She said smiling weakly. Pleased to make yours, Lance.

> You were lucky. He said. Aeris raised an eyebrow. When I got here, you were surrounded by wolves, licking their lips. He patted the dog's head. Kappi came to your rescue as soon as he saw you lying there helpless. You should thank him.

> In response, Kappi wagged his tail.

> Aeris was still confused but decided to think about it later. Or better yet, ask Lance about it. Thank you, Kappi. She said politely. The dog barked once and dropped down on his two paws. Lance laughed. I should have known. I should have realized that he likes you the moment he ran for your rescue. Lance's looked at Aeris. He usually minds his business.

> Aeris shifted under the blanket. what are you doing here? Isn't this the City of Ancient?

> Lance lifted his finger. Used to be. Now, it's just a mere ruin of some sort. I come here to stare at the skies sometimes. He leaned back, looking up. It's the perfect place to camp, you know. And Kappi loves it.

> Aeris opened her mouth to speak then shook her head.

> How could this be? She looked at Lance, still looking up. _What does he mean by used to be?_
>
 Aeris tried another way. What about the excavation men? They are supposed to be digging right beyond this point. Even it's night; there must be some sort of lamplight or something. But, I don't see anyone there. Aeris pointed out, glancing to her left. The entrance of the Sleeping forest was partially visible among the leafless tree trunks. It almost looked like what Lance said.
>
 A mere ruin.
>
 Lance was mildly confused. well, I heard that they excavated something underneath the earth. I heard it was some sort of jewel â€"I have no idea. But that thing summoned some monster which is now one of the problems to eliminate.
>
 Aeris was getting more and more confused. I never heard it. When did it happen?
>
 About 4 years ago. Lance replied. Aeris threw away her blanket and set up upright from the ground. Kappi started to bark but Lance put his hand on his collar to steady him.
>
 When he looked back at her, he noticed that she was trembling uncontrollably. Hey, are you all right he asked, uneasily.
>
 Aeris stared straight ahead. You are lying She murmured through her trembling lips. Lance scratched the back of his head. Well, I wouldn't say lying. I just have poor memory. It could have been three years I am not so sure.
>
 You are lying! Aeris cried hotly. Kappi barked once more but Lance held him back. He turned to Aeris once more.
>
 I don't lie. Besides, why would I lie? And funny you get so excited over that cuz it really happened long time ago. There's not an iota of people who haven't heard of The Surd', which was resurrected from this site. He realized that Aeris was shivering.

>
 He quickly went over and knelt beside her and covered her shoulders with the blanket. Are you all right? He asked, looking at her.
>
 Aeris didn't hear his question. Small knot of uneasiness tightened at the bottom of her heart, growing bigger and bigger by the minute.
> Aeris gripped the blanket till her knuckles went white.
 _I must be dreaming. This couldn't be true! _
> She screamed frantically in her head.

> Strong nausea hit her head hard. Aeris almost fell forward from the dizziness. Lance quickly grabbed her shoulders and steadied her.

>

> This can't be happening
> Tears formed at the side of her eyes.

> There was a small pause. Lance stared at her for a while before finally asking, What is it?

> Aeris gulped, the tears now running freely. She thought she had cried enough for the last 22 years of her life. But still, it wasn't enough.
 Tell me, Lance She whispered. When did Rufus, the President of Shinra get elected?
>
 Lance paused for a while, thinking. Aeris knew that she was right.
> But still, she wanted to make sure.

> It was about 41 years ago, Aeris. He said finally.
<p>

Cloud's whole body froze.

> The tree was talking!

> How amusing Cloud didn't crack a smile.
>
 He was dropped into the small world, confused out of his skull and now, a talking tree was attacking him with no apparent reason.

>
 Normally if it was just one stomp of tree, he wouldn't have any trouble slashing into pieces of firewood. But, standing in the middle of the circle of the trees that was closing in on him, Cloud realized that there was zero chance of winning.
>
 Cloud frantically looked around for some means of escape. In response, the tree zapped his lightening at his direction again. Cloud barely missed it but felt a slight pain on his right shoulder.

> Damn! I gotta think!
>
 Cloud gritted his teeth as another thunder cracked and barely missed his feet. He quickly swung his sword at the tree near him.

> With a lout crack, the tree was chopped into half.

> Cloud cried leaping out of the way as the thick trunk of the tree crashed down.
 This'll go on forever! Cloud cried, blocking himself with his sword. The lightening hit the sword hard and Cloud felt the severe vibration ringing through the sword. He gulped. If he would ever get hit by that lightening directly
>
 He could be a toast in a second!
> Wait a minute
> Cloud dodged the branch that swung at him in full force.

> They were talking trees Cloud cut the branch in a flash and quickly leapt back. _Which means_
>
 Hey, wait a minute! Cloud cried urgently. To his enormous relief, he noticed that the trees halted their movements briefly before attacking at him again.
>
 I am serious! Please, listen to me! Cloud cried once more. I am not your enemy! I â€"I don't know where the hell I am, although I have some vague recollection that this was supposed to be the sleeping forest!
>
 The trees stopped their attack. Cloud stood, breathing heavily. Sweat tickled down at the side of his face. Wiping his cheek, Cloud realized that it was not his sweat. Thick red blood was smudged on his palm.
>
 Cloud looked up once more, panting. I am not here to fight. He said, dropping both arms to his side. Please, say something.
> The trees were still silent. As if contemplating whether to believe him or not, they stood with their branches poised to attack any minute. Cloud stood, trying to slow down his breath.

> He pleaded. Believe me. I don't intend to fight without a reason.

> The trees remained where they stood. Then, Cloud heard a clear voice behind him.

> Don't turn. It said. And don't move either. I'll have to take in your word but you are still suspicious. I'll have to report you to the Elders. Without turning around, walk straight ahead. The voice continued close to him. If you make any move to look back or sneak a attack, I'll kill you on that spot. Mind that.

> Cloud muttered. He started to walk as the voice directed at him. Judging from the voice, it seemed like a young female. Yet, the hint of authority was unmistakable.

> Just who are you? Were you controlling the trees just now? Cloud asked, walking along the path. The path had appeared out of nowhere. Cloud noticed lot of footmarks along it.

> The voice didn't answer for a moment. She answered shortly. Cloud dared to squint his eyes sideways to get a glimpse of a silk robe flapping behind him.

> Quite impressive, controlling the natures as a means of defense. He tried again, intending to make a small conversation.
 It's not controlling. The voice said in a firm voice. I never control anything. I merely ask for them to lend their hands to me whenever I am in trouble.

>
 How would you know that I am your enemy? Cloud asked, curious. And plus, I never heard of anyone living here. You said elders, which means there is a village near here. Am I right?

> The voice hesitated. You talk too much. She said. Cloud grinned. I am just curious.

> The voice sighed. Well, if you promise to shut up after I answer your question, I'll tell you. She said. Cloud nodded.

> The path lead them further down into some sort of valley. Beautiful trees that Cloud never saw was growing in full green and sound of million birds filled the sky above.

> I knew you were not from here, that is, from my village, because of the way you dress and the way you carry a weapon. No one here uses a weapon. Anyone from outside means enemy to us. The voice said. And one more thing. No one from outside has ever come near the sleeping forest or the Sleeping Village. They never even set foot into our land. So, when I saw you, I figured you were an outsider.

> Cloud was a bit confused. What are you saying? Sleeping Village? Where is that? Is it beyond the forest? He asked, feeling slightly uneasy.

> The voice said sharply. No more talk. Just continue walking forward.
 Cloud wanted to know more but decided it would be better to meet the so-called Elders if he wanted answers.

>
 This was one paranoid chick. Cloud wondered what she looked like.

>
 There it is. After some heavy silence and more walk, the voice said suddenly. Cloud squinted at the direction the voice indicated. Surprisingly enough, there really was a small village just beyond the valley. Peaceful puff of smoke densely welled up from the chimneys of several odd looking houses gathered around.

>
 So there is a village here after all. Cloud thought to himself as he advanced further into the village. Cloud noticed two fierce looking men guarded the entrance of the village, blocking the path. They watched them approach the village with alertness.

>
 What have you got there, Leigh? One of them called out. Who is this?

> I have to take him to the Elders, Marco. The voice behind Cloud replied sternly. That's all I can say to you. Now, move aside before

I make you.
 The two men looked at each other before finally deciding to squirm out of the way. Be careful. Leigh. You've got a live one there. The other man muttered as they passed by him. I know what I am doing. Leigh said before she ordered Cloud to move forward.

>
 So, your name is Leigh? Cloud asked as they passed by several houses. The village seemed quite big and peaceful. Small children wearing some worn-out robes were scampering around the village, screaming and giggling. There were several people going about with their businesses. Cloud briefly wondered why the houses were so old fashioned. They weren't even made out of bricks or metals. If anything, they were carefully sewed with plant stems.

>
 Leigh seemed like she was not in a talkative mood today. Shut up. was all she said as they passed several more houses and still more curious eyes.

The elders will be here shortly, Miss Leigh. A middle-aged lady said as she reappeared into their tent. Leigh nodded. Very well. She said. The lady stepped out without saying furthermore.

>
 Cloud glanced around. The rectangular tent was quite roomy. It was filled with various worn-off books and candles. Some of them were laid open on the floor but Cloud could neither read nor understand what they contained. If he didn't know better, it looked like a child's scribble on a piece of paper.

>
 Leigh ordered. Cloud obeyed, getting quite used to her brusque manner of speaking. Leigh sat across from him, moving aside some of the books carefully. Taking in the opportunity, Cloud finally set his eyes on the owner of that voice.

>
 The robe that Cloud observed earlier loosely covering her from head to toe; Leigh was a woman of extraordinary air. Cloud couldn't pinpoint what but there were definitely an air of familiarity in her. The robe had covered her hair completely, but some of them came down the side of her face, showing it's wavy green color. Her face, particularly her purple-green eyes, had a sharp, penetrating gaze as she stared back at him. Cloud realized that she too was observing him.

>
 Cloud didn't know what she thought of him but he judged her to be quite beautiful. Creamy white face and oval shaped face showed off her beauty while her firm lips and hard eyes proved her personality. Despite the silence between them, Leigh didn't once open her mouth to speak.

>
 Cloud smiled. Now you trust me enough to face me one-on-one? He asked, starting to feel a little uncomfortable under her hostile gaze.

> GeeJust as I thoughtice-cold beauty queen

> You are in our authority now. She replied sternly. Whatever you do, it won't go far. It's not a trust, so don't misunderstand.
 Cloud raised an eyebrow. Oh? And what if I take you hostage? He suggested, getting interested at where this was going. Leigh, on the other hand, didn't show any emotional change. We can take care of ourselves. Even in the hostage situation, they'll kill you nevertheless if you pull anything, even if it means sacrificing the unfortunate victim. She replied, not even blinking.

>
 Cloud stared.

>
 Whewthis one might be a little hard to deal with

>
 I wouldn't dream of doing it, then. Cloud replied simply.

Leigh nodded. She said and closed her mouth once more.

>
 Just then, someone stepped into the tent. Leigh quickly stood with her head lowered but Cloud merely glanced up at the elderly man.

>
 Can a person get THAT old? Cloud wondered as the wrinkled man nodded in Leigh's direction and looked at Cloud under his mane of snow-white hair. He had a long beard that reached down to the floor and still continued for another feet or two. He looked much too old to be called living'. But as Cloud met his gaze without blinking, a pair of piercing gray eyes among the wrinkles told complete different story to him.

>
 No one spoke for a moment. The old man's gaze continued to stare into Cloud's mako green eyes until Cloud felt slightly confused. Leigh didn't make a sound, standing beside them.

>
 Finally, Cloud slowly looked away. The old man sighed.

>
 He's one of those humans, Leigh. He said after a pause. Both Cloud and Leigh looked at him. The old man collected his long beard and sat down, putting the coiled pile on his lap. Yes, he is a human. And I must say, he's a cyberdyne too.

>
 Cloud was getting confused. What are you talking about? He asked cautiously. Cyberdyne? Never heard of it.

>
 Leigh gave him a reprimanding look. Do not speak to The Elder in those manner! She said sharply. The old man didn't seem to mind.

> He looked keenly at Cloud for a moment or two before finally turning to Leigh. You've brought a very interesting piece of human today, Leigh. Where did you find him?

> Cloud was getting quite mad. Hey, I can understand too! Don't treat me as I am some kind of animal! He said hotly.

> Damn, I'm sorry, Red. He thought, thinking about his fury red friend.

>
 Leigh glared and opened her mouth to snap at him before the old man turned to Cloud.

> I know that. You don't have to get so cross at me. He said. Now it was Leigh's turn to get mad. Elder! You know that you must not talk directly at those outsiders! It'll affect your health!
 What difference does it make? I am sitting here right beside him. Now, tell me your name. He said with same monotonous tone. Cloud subdued his own. My name is Cloud Strife.

>
 I am Yamji, one of The Elders of this Sleeping village.

> Cloud nodded. Yes, Leigh told me. But He shook his head. I don't think I have time for this yet. I have to find my friends who are in The City Of Ancient. I really am sorry. He said.

> Yamji looked at Leigh in a questioning way and Leigh lowered her head a little before she started to explain.
 I found him at the Sleeping Forest, Elder. The way he acted seemed very suspicious so I asked for the Guardian of Trees to lend me a hand.

>
 In other word, you attacked him. Yamji finished. Leigh looked a little embarrassed. He was suspicious. She repeated, but in a very small voice. Yamji shook his head and turned to Cloud.

>
 Now, who are you looking for? I am afraid you are not going to find them here in the village or the Temple of Ancient because no humans have ever set foot on this land. In fact, I think you are the first one here.

> Cloud caught himself from shouting. What are you saying? My friend Aeris was in the Temple of Ancient so Barret and Tifa accompanied me to go search for her there. Cloud said, looking from Leigh to Yamji.

> His mind briefly flashed back to that painful scene and Cloud quickly erased it off of his head. He had to get a grip on reality.

> Leigh shook her head and rolled her eyes while Yamji chuckled softly.
 Maybe we have a communication problem here or you must have had some kind of weird dream. No human or Cyberdyne came to this part of land, young man. As I said, you are not like us, which put you in a different category. And plus, he put up his hand when Cloud tried to protest. "Plus, you weren't able to communicate with me just now with our eyes, which proves that you are not one of us at all.

>
 Cloud was getting annoyed. You keep saying that over and over again, Elder, as if you or Leigh are not humans. He grumbled, frowning. Leigh jerked her head in his direction.

>
 Don't you DARE put us on the same level as your lowly race! We are not humans! She cried, highly insulted.

Cloud looked at Yamji and he nodded a little. I wouldn't go that far but yes, it's true. We are not humans. Then he glanced up at Cloud and met him with the same serene expression.

> Have you ever heard of the race called, The Cetra'?<p>

3. Default Chapter Title

The Revolution: Chapter Three The Revolution -Final Fantasy 7

> Part One: The Slumber

> Chapter Three

> By L u f i a<a>

>
 Yuffie looked around the room. She scowled. Am I the only one around here who thinks Barret's choice of party lacks skillful fighter or is there any other person who thinks like me?

>
 No one spoke for a moment.

>
 The two body' of Aeris and Cloud was still in the room above. The party was STILL gathered under the bottom steps of the stairs with the innkeeper openly frowning at them. She was muttering something as she wiped the counter vigorously.

>
 Barret scowled back. What's so damn wrong about this choice? Me, Vincent, Red and Tifa go over to check on this man Vincent was talking about and the rest of you stayin behind in case something comes up; what s the damn prob here? He shouted. Yuffie refused to let it go.

>
 That leaves ME with that DUMB toy cat and disease-carrying cigar FREAK! She yelled impatiently.

>
 Red XIII slowly shook his head and looked at Tifa. Here we go again

> Tifa gave him a helpless look. Uh-huh, I'm afraid so. She said and turned back to the two.

> Cid was not the one to stay behind when he was openly insulted. Hey, who're you calling a freak, you BRAT! It's none of yer damn business whether I smoke or not!

> Yuffie turned towards Cid without hesitation. HA! I don't mind YOU getting all the disease but what about the person NEAR you getting effected by YOUR so-called Puff-Your-Lungs-Out?? She shouted, not bothering to lower her voice.

> I would gladly take you to the other side of the grave with me if you DO get one. Cid sneered. It was Barret's turn to shake his head.
 I think we are getting carried away He murmured. Tifa looked at

him.

>
 Yuffie was not finished with Cid. I'll burn every pack of yer cigar into crisp if it EVER gets near ME! She yelled.

> Then YOU become crisp if that ever happens! Cid shouted back.
 Uh, guys Tifa said uneasily.

>
 Don't get so over-confident, Mister! You won't even come near me if I take off, cuz yer so SLOW! Yuffie shot back.

> Can we get back to real issue here Red said.
 HA! What a chicken! Thinking of running away even before putting up a fight! Cid snickered.

> Red's right. Barret agreed.
 Wha? A CHICKEN? Why you-!

> Tifa said.
 Ha! Look at you! Getting red like some turkey. You sure have something related to those kind of species.

> Red said.

> Both Yuffie and Barret yelled simultaneously. SHUT UP!!!

> Vincent shook his head. What a mess. He muttered. Then he turned to the rest of the gang, who had fallen silent after the sudden outburst.

> I think it's better to bring Yuffie with us. That way, we can shut her up without arguing like this. He turned to Tifa. And, you'll have to take Yuffie's place, Tifa. I think you wanted to stay behind anyway.
 Tifa looked down. yeah. I really want to stay with Cloud. She said.

> Barret clapped his hands. Alright then, it's decided. He announced. Cait Sith spoke up.
 What are we gonna do anywayz? I was away when you guys discussed this.

>
 Everyone groaned loudly. Oh, GEEZ! They chorused, frowning at the toy cat. Cait put on a rueful smile. Sorry, I had to do something outside. He batted his eyelashes at Barret.

>
 Barret shook his head and muttered something inconspicuous before facing Cait again. Argg! All right, you got it. Vincent was talking about waking up those two sleepyheads upstairs. He knows someone who can give us a reasonable explanation about this crap we are going through. He briefly turned to Vincent. Oh, I forgot to ask. Who is it anywayz? Your pal?

>
 Vincent regarded him with empty expression. He finally said. Barret shrugged and faced Cait again. Anyways, he's a loner who resides in someplace covered in ice. Dunno the location though. Barret turned to the reticent figure again but Vincent spoke before him. I don't know yet. I'll know once I get there.

>
 You sure know how to make a person confused. Cid grumbled, fingering his cigar. He glanced down at it and looked at Yuffie. A slow, devilish grin appeared on his lips as he searched for his lighter on his jacket. Tifa, who stood beside him, spoke up.

>
 I am not one of the team, but don't you think it's better for us to make sure where we're going and why before headed there?

> Vincent looked down. All I know is that Cloud and Aeris is in trouble. I can sense their disturbance from far away.

> Cait hopped with enthusiasm. Well, no use in stayin here thinking about this and that. We gotta move forward!
 Yuffie grinned at him. What do you mean? You are stuck here! She reminded him, her eyes full of pride. You guys will be staying here like some useless bummer, ha ha ha!

>
 Tifa exchanged knowing glances with the rest of the group.

>
 Good luck everyone. She merely said, ignoring the hyena laugh Yuffie was pouring on and on.

I don't know what Rufus is planning on doing with the Ancient. Elena remarked, glancing at the two men.

>
 After the president spoke with them, the Turks were getting ready for a departure to the outskirts of Midgar. They knew whom they were going to encounter and they wanted to make sure they don't taste the bitter defeat like last time.

>
 Rude made no comment but Reno shrugged, getting equipped. It's not our concern. He replied. She's our subject now, Elena. We don't need to think about their welfares. We only do what's told.

> But I thought we were through hogging her. Elena argued, facing Reno. He geared his nightstick at his side and straightened his jacket.

> Like I said, Elena, it's not our concern. That's not the way to be the Turks! He said impatiently. Rude shortly glanced at him before turning away without a word. He always seemed awfully occupied with his mind. Whatever he was thinking, Reno knew that he would never share it with anyone except himself. Sometimes, Rude seemed to know what was wrong and what was right better than Reno himself and that bothered him. It wouldn't hurt to obtain a personal opinion from someone as reticent as Rude but that man didn't bother to show his mind whether he liked it or not.

> Elena, on the other hand, talked too much and he got the impression that she didn't trust her own judgment as much as Reno.

> Then, why did she bother to become the Turks? Reno briefly wondered. _She's a woman, for Pete's sake. Doesn't she even have a life?_

>
 Elena put on a disagreeable frown on her pretty face but didn't make any reply. Quite content that he had shut her up, Reno slowly looked around the Turks office then back at his two companions.

>
 Are we ready? He asked.

> Rude answered in a low voice and Elena nodded, brushing back her front hair. Where are we headed?
 It's not decided yet. I've tried to contact Reeve and he was about to tell me his location when he suddenly went offline. Reno replied, furrowing his brows. He said he's going to contact me soon.

> Elena looked a little concerned. Is he in trouble?
 Reno shrugged. So what if he is? They won't be able to do anything to that stuffed toy. And plus, we've got Barret's girl. They won't be able to pull anything.

>
 Elena briefly remembered the small girl who was brought here at the HQ four days ago. She didn't look much like Barret but she had chatted non-stop about him. Elena had felt a small pang inside her stomach as she gazed down at the small girl between two guards. The little one seemed to have no idea where she was and didn't look bothered by the place at all.

>
 Using such an innocent being as a hostage How much lower will they get? Would I be able to get through these amateur quality emotions and become the true Turks?

>
 For the first time, Rude stirred. Hey, Reno. Don't you think it's better for Reeve to stop using his stuffed spy? He doesn't like the idea of being a spy anyways. He said slowly. He said it gets on his nerves.

>
 Quickly, Reno searched through his expression for any sign of concern in his face but he couldn't find any. If he was having second thought about hounding the Avalanche, he didn't show it.

>
 We'll see, Rude. We'll see. He replied, putting on his sunglasses. But right now, we need Reeve the way he is. Even if he

doesn't like the idea anymore and getting all mushy because of the way they treat him, still, he's stuck there with us. It's not an option. He said in a business-like voice.

>
 Elena frowned a little. Why didn't YOU take the job of being a spy and get all the petty feelings? She asked crossly.

>
 Reno put on a charming grin. 'Cuz I know what I am doing. He replied.

Barret's gang had left for the continent north from here.

>
 Putting on some extra shirts and sweaters in their luggage, they bid farewell to the rest of the group staying behind and took off in Cid's Tiny Bronco. Barret insisted that they would be just fine, riding that thing without Cid. Tifa watched the tiny plane steer into the horizon and then with a sigh, headed back to the inn.

>
 Kalm town was very peaceful and it soothed her frayed nerves. Tifa was glad that she decided to stay behind. If she had gone with the others, she would be biting her nails and going ballistics.

>
 The beautiful layers of colors painted the vast sky in deep red. Tifa took a long look at it, taking in the cool breeze that brushed by her side.

>
 Yes, it was very peaceful.

>
 But did she feel peaceful and calm within herself?

>
 Tifa sighed again and walked back to the inn slowly.

>
 Cait was nowhere to be seen but Tifa knew that Cid was sitting by their bedside in the darkness, smoking as usual. She silently made her way upstairs. The wooden stairs made a low squeaking sound as she ascended.

>
 Cid was sitting between the two beds, staring into space. The first time Tifa met him, he struck her as stubborn and foul-mouthing middle-aged man. But as their journey continued and they spent more and more time together, Tifa couldn't help but recognize the kind-hearted man residing within.

>
 Cid himself looked like he wanted to hide this inner self. But, when it's so obvious that he's pretending to be harsh, who wouldn't see through his deception?

>
 Even Yuffie saw through him. Maybe that's why she's taking advantage of him. Tifa smiled thinly despite the situation.

>
 A silent silhouette didn't seem to know her presence. He blew another ring of smoke, sighing.

>
 Tifa made a small advance towards him. She whispered.

> Quickly, Cid jumped up and scrambled on his feet. Y â€"yes? He cried. Then he noticed Tifa. His face relaxed a notch. Damn, it's you! Don't scare me like that! He said severely. Tifa stifled a laugh. She briskly walked up to him and sat on another chair next to Cid. What are you doing? It's dark in here. She commented, looking at Cid sideways.

> Slowly, Cid sat back down. Yeah, I feel like sitting in the dark. He muttered. Then, he raised an eyebrow. Hey, where's that damn cat? Wasn't he with you?

> Tifa shook her head a bit. I thought he was with you. Oh well, leave him alone. I think he's been acting like that since our visit to gold saucer.

> Cid scoffed. Dunno what he's made of, but he sure likes to act suspicious. Then, he paused for a moment. Damn, it's so quiet around here. Gets on my nerve. He muttered, impatiently shaking off the

cigarette end.

> Tifa grinned, thinking of the way he was sitting before she intruded on him. Really? I like it. I enjoy the peace and quietness because I hardly had time to enjoy one. She lowered her head a bit. The strand of her long dark hair fell on to the side of her face. I certainly didn't have one ever since I joined the Avalanche.

> Cid coughed a little. Damn, what was he supposed to say?

>
 Like he felt before when she broke off in front of everyone, Cid didn't know how to make women feel comfortable or better when feeling down. Fortunately, Tifa didn't stay like that for long. She raised her face and smiled.

>
 Quite a life, huh? I wish when this is over, I can settle down like a normal women of my age and well stuff. She finished lamely.

>
 A quick blush flowered on her cheeks. Cid looked away. Well, don't go all carried away. We still have things to do, you know. He said in a serious tone. Tifa's smile faded.

> She said in a small voice.

> They sat in silence for some moment. Tifa thought it was best to leave him alone and started to stand up when Cid spoke up.

> Do you know what I was thinking just now? He asked in a surprisingly serene expression on his face. Tifa looked at him. She asked.

> Cid smiled, looking far away with his sea blue eyes. Hell, no. That spike's gonna wake up sooner or later. I know it. He glanced at another figure on the bed. I am talking about Aeris.

> Tifa remained silent. Cid continued.

> You know That gal's too outspoken for my taste and she's all too hyper. But then, she can be dead serious or confusing at times so I dunno what to make of her. He said with an amused smile on his sunburnt face. But, I didn't realize howhow should I put ithow precious her being here with us is. I dunno, her mere presence tells me that.

> Tifa didn't say anything. Maybe she didn't want to interrupt him. For her, it was the first time he ever spoke in such a serious manner.
 With such open face.

>
 Just before we were heading for Wutai, you remember doncha? That carp ran away with our materia. Well, that timeI talked to her for a brief moment. She said, Cid, is airship very big? I kinda felt like bragging so I replied it was HUGE baby. She loved my response. She made me promise to take her in the airin my ship. He took a long drink of his cigar. I dunno. I was just thinking about that time. She giggles and we laugh, she gets serious and we get serious.

>
 He pointed his cigar-end at Cloud. Spike here also acted like a kid when she was around. Even Barret. Well, he's mostly made of rubber so it ain't so hard to melt him Cid shifted his right leg on his left knee and leaned back, blowing another ring of smoke. She had a way with people. Maybe it's in her genes, huh?

>
 Tifa smiled, small tears forming on the side of her eyes. Yes, Cid. She was very precious. She's still precious to us. I wish they'd come back to us quick Slowly, she wiped her eyes. I wonder what would have happened when Barret didn't stop Cloud? She briefly closed her eyes. Sorry, I didn't mean to think like that, Cid. I don't want to even think that they are unconscious

>
 they arein reality, right? Cid finished for her in a gentle voice. Tifa nodded slowly.

>
 Cid stood up. Why don't we think in a brighter way? Barret's team will soon find the cause of this madness and bring them back to

reality in no time. He said with his usual confidence. The gentle voice was gone. His former glint in his eyes told her that the old Cid was back. Tifa smiled for him. Of course, Cid. Of course. She said.

>
 Cid reached over and patted her shoulder. Be brave. He said before he went over and climbed down the stairs, leaving her behind.

>
 Tifa sat in silence.

>
 Cid's words were still ringing in her head.

>
 I didn't know how precious her being here with us is

>
 Did Cloud feel the same way towards her? Did he feel that she was needed and that's why he fell for her?

>
 Tifa slowly stood up. Looking down at Cloud's peaceful face, Tifa couldn't help but feel a small ache in her heart.

>
 Why aren't you waking up, Cloud? Don't you want to see me? Don't you want to be here with us?

>
 Tifa stared down at him for a moment. Then slowly, she bent down.

> Her lips gently met with his. Tifa closed her eyes and let the tears fall onto his cheeks.

> Please come back to us Cloud

>
 And when he wakes up this time, she wouldn't stay like a puppet.

>
 I won't hold back. I'll tell him how I feel about him. Tifa vowed, slowly straightening up.

>
 Just wake up, Cloud. She whispered. _I'll be waiting_

>
 The afternoon sun slowly disappeared beyond the horizon, slowly painting the sky with darkness.

>
 The silhouette of Tifa stood there for a long time, unmoving.

The City of Ancient looked like someone exploded it with bombs.

>
 Aeris couldn't remember the last time she saw so many debris lying on the ground like this.

>
 I don't believe this Will the City of Ancient turn into a mere ruin in near future?

>
 Aeris shook her head.

>
 No, she won't let it happen. She would try to stop the digging when she gets back to her time. Lance had told her about the jewel and the type of monster that thing had summoned.

>
 The Surd' was a huge dragon-like monster that had been asleep under the digging site for a long time. He explained that it had been sleeping for about 100 years until the summon jewel was discovered 4 years ago and a greedy man tried to control the world with it's power. Unfortunately, it didn't work out for him. It's been said that only the warrior with a pure heart would be able to use this jewel of Summon.

>
 Obviously, the man's greed turned the creature into a demonic figure, it's mind full of destruction. After the monster went out of control, the people found the dead body of the man not far away from this place.

>
 It still roams the world, destroying houses and killing mass number of innocent people at the most unexpected time.

>
 Aeris walked along the faint path of the City of Ancient, thinking about such desire to have the power to control this poor creature.

> Only if she could return to her timeshe would surely stop him being

used as mere destruction of the planet. She would gladly find the warrior for this creature and meet it's purpose with the right kind of mind.

> Aeris brushed back her front hair and half closed her eyes, feeling the gentle breeze of the morning air.
 She no longer felt the holy presence around this area. That saddened her but she knew that this place would not remain untouched forever.

> Some day, sometime, a human's feet will eventually touch the ground and they will probably mess up the place.

> Like now

> You are up early. Somebody spoke behind her. With a strained smile, Aeris turned.

> It's my habit. I am sorry, have I awaken you, Lance? She asked with a rueful smile. Lance shook his head.

> Nah, I always wake up this early. I was awake when you got up.
 I see Aeris suddenly heard a low rumbling sound from her stomach.

>
 Seeing her blush, Lance laughed. I prepared some meal back at the camp. Why don't you join me? He asked, an impish glimmer in his eyes. Embarrassed, Aeris started to follow Lance back to the campsite.

>
 Are you sure that's enough for you and Kappi? Aeris asked when she took the plate of light meal from Lance. His share was incredibly small. She certainly didn't want to starve the poor animal because of her.

>
 Kappi didn't seem to mind. He munched on his share without comment. Lance laughed. It's ok! C'mon, it's not much but I think you can't say you don't like the taste cuz I cook pretty well. He said with pride. Besides, we'll be breaking camp today and return back to the town.

>
 Aeris looked down.

>
 Lance hadn't asked where she was from or what was she doing in this ruin. He seemed to be choosing for a right time to open the subject.

>
 How am I going to explain this to him? Will he believe me?

>
 It's alright if you don't have a place to stay, Aeris. You can return back with me, if you want. Lance quickly offered, trying to make her feel comfortable. Aeris hesitated.

>
 Don't you want to know who I am first? She asked in a small voice. Lances' smile didn't falter. Should I? He asked in a teasing way.

> Aeris had to laugh. No, it's not that kind of thing. I just wanted to prove that I am not someone suspicious. She said quickly.

> Just old fashioned, huh? He asked, eyeing the pink dress, which had gotten quite dirty. Aeris felt her face reddening. yeah, kind of.

> Lance threw back his head and laughed. Gee! You are SO naÃ~ve! Don't you feel insulted or anything, Aeris? He asked, spooning his food.

> Aeris put on an amused smile. Nope. I think that's perfectly natural judging by the fact that I DID come from the past.

> The spoon halted in mid-air. Lance sat there with his mouth open. For a moment, he stared at her for a moment before putting down his spoon and shifting himself upright.

> He asked in disbelief.

> Aeris coughed. I didn't want to tell you until I sort out what's happening here butBut I think that can wait, since you intend to bring me along. She explained, hoping for a miracle.

> What if Lance finds this unbelievable? Then what?
>
 Go on. Lance urged in a gentle voice. Aeris gathered up her
courage and took a deep breath.
>
 Okay, here goes.

Cloud stared at Yamji for a long moment.

>
 His mind flashed back at Aeris, the sole survivor of the
Ancient.

> The only survivor.

> What's happening here? Didn't Aeris say that she was the last
one of that race?

>
 Yamji and Leigh waited in silence as Cloud tried to sort out
his confused mind.

> Yamji's short word had hit him hard and it wasn't just because
other Cetra existed. No, it was much more than that.

> I know what Cetra is. Cloud said slowly. He lowered his gaze, away
from Yamji. Though I thought they weren't living anymore
 Leigh's
face flushed in red. How dare you! Cetras live longer lives than you
humans!

>
 Yamji held out his hand. Enough, Leigh. Let me take care of
this.

>
 Some silence followed.

>
 Cloud shut his eyes and tried to erase that this was happening
to him. If he'd open his eyes, everything will be back to normal.
Tifa and others would be waiting for him just beyond the forest.
Aeris would still be with him, talking about Cid's plane.

>
 When he did open his eyes, he realized that it was the reality
he'd tried to erase.

>
 Yamji watched him with understanding eyes though it looked
like even he found this hard to comprehend. He asked, with genuine
concern. Cloud nodded slowly. Yes. And I am ready to listen.

>
 Then I'll begin. Yamji glanced at Leigh who showed little
interest in this whole situation. As usual, she was preoccupied in
thinking about herself. She rarely associated with village people and
it wasn't surprising that she didn't show any interest in this human.

> Our race starts from about 1000 years ago. Though we'd existed
centuries after centuries, no one knew of our presence because we
were extremely cautious. Our people were always afraid that someone
would try to destroy our culture. We had access to outside world but
humans didn't have access to our land, which was our greatest
advantage. We liked the way we lived and didn't want to stain it with
dirty lives of humans. We blocked the entrance of the Sleeping Forest
with a special spell and thus prevented from outsiders from intruding
unexpectedly.

> That's why you said no humans ever set foot on this land, right?
Cloud asked, putting the missing puzzles in his confused head. Yamji
nodded in confirmation. Leigh remained silent.

> What you said about Cetra becoming extinct well, we were expecting
that day sooner or later. He said, his expression unchanged. Leigh
quickly raised her head. She cried. You can't say that! Even in the
worst predicament, our people are ready to survive! Don't you have
any faith in them? Why are you sticking to your own prognostication
when others say otherwise?

> Even the highest soothsayers have their doubts. I am not saying I
am absolutely certain that day will come. I am only predicting Yamji

rubbed his tired eyes slowly. Leigh's opinion about Cetra living longer lives was no bluff. Cloud gazed at his wrinkles that almost covering his eyes. Dark sun burnt skin made quite a contrary with his snow-white beard. He looked like a soothsayer all right.

> It was obvious that Leigh didn't like what she was hearing. Then, you feel that our race will become
 Yes, Leigh. But let us cover that in other times. Now, Cloud needs an explanation. He soothed, nodding his head. Then he turned to Cloud.

>
 That's our story so far.

>
 Cloud was still confused. Who's Cyberdyne? He asked. You told me I was Cyberdyne. What is it?

>
 Yamji laughed shortly. My, my, you came from different all right. Otherwise, you wouldn't be asking me this. He rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Well, I always hear the outside news from young messengers of the village so I can't say I am pretty knowing myself.

> Is itsome kind of robots? Cloud urged. Although he was grateful that Yamji was taking time to answer all this confusing elements, Cloud didn't want to waste time.

> No, son. Cyberdyne' doesn't mean literally. It's a group of humans in this era. They separated themselves from human race and created their own, developing whole new bundle of unwanted technology. I heard that they invented some kind of ship that can fly. Yamji glanced at Cloud from head to toe. When I saw how you were dressed, I just assumed that you were one of them. You are dressed quite odd compared to us simple Cetra, you know.

> Cloud remained silent. After realizing the situation he was plunged into, he didn't think he'd be any more surprised than he already is. Still, hearing Yamji's explanation, Cloud couldn't help but feel numb at this sudden news. Of course, they were no longer called Cyberdyne' or anything that out-of-place but it was true technology developed speedily over the years. New transportations and machines.

> The Hi-Technology Corporation called Shinra.
 Cids' airship

> The last surviving ancient

>
 It only confirmed one thing that Cloud feared.

>
 The only reasonable yet unbelievable answer

> Cloud felt his heart beating faster and faster as he slowly lowered his gaze to stare at the ground.

> I
 I am in the past_

The snow-covered continent Vincent referred to was located near the bone village.

>
 The tiny Bronco had malfunctioned a bit when Barret tried to steer it onto the landing site so they had to leave the poor thing above sea level and had to walk towards the beach.

>
 You s-should have b-b-brought C-Cid! Yuffie gasped through her chattering teeth. W-We wud h-h-have landed h-h-here w-without g-g-gettin a-all wet!

>
 They were standing on the snow-covered region. Because they didn't bother to dry their wet shoes, the cold wind was freezing the hell outta all of them except Red.

>
 Throwing her a dirty look, Barret opened his bag and took out several sweaters and extra socks.

> There! Quit throwing that half-witted tantrums on me and put it on. He said, throwing several at Yuffie. She quickly caught it and

started to wear layers over layers. Barret turned to Red and Vincent. Any of you want to wear something?

> Vincent shook his head and Red smiled a little. I'm just afraid Yuffie would want to wear my hide. He commented, watching Yuffie still shivering and looking huge like a snowman. D-D-Donthu waddy, R-Red. She stammered, her teeth making a funny noise.

> Barret chuckled. Looks like yer tongue is freezing up! I take that as a good sign. Yuffie merely glared at him. He turned to Vincent.

> You feel anything yet? He asked the silent figure, who was neither shivering, nor talking. He seemed to be deep in thought.

> How about "we walk due north from here? Vincent suggested, squinting through the slight snowstorm. Red slowly walked over to them.

> I heard there's a village somewhere around here. I heard it from Grandfather. He said, looking at Vincent. Could he' be residing there?

> Vincent paused for a moment. It's He said shortly. Both Barret and Red raised their eyebrows.
 Vincent nodded. Yes, a

Vincent took a deep breath and frowned a little as if reliving a painful memory. Red XIII and Barret waited for him to say more, but he remained silent without another comment. Whoever she was, it seemed like he'd rather not discuss about her at this moment. He didn't elaborate further and started to make his way over the deep snow, leaving Red and Barret full of curiosity.

Watching Vincent pass by shivering Yuffie, Red narrowed his eyes that shone with deep intelligence.

I wonder who that person is... He murmured, hardly audible above the gushing wind. Barret cocked his thick brows. You wonder? I'm DYING of curiosity!

Red smiled, his eyes still on Vincent. Maybe we'll know a little more about him when this is over. He commented. Vincent had halted somewhere and was looking back at them, his red cape flying around him. He raised his arm a little, indicating them to follow.

What's there to know? He's just a former Turks who knows how to shut his mouth, not like someone else in our group. Barret grumbled, glancing at Yuffie who was still busy complaining despite her frozen lips.

Aren't we gonna follow him or what? She yelled. She started to trot after Vincent with much difficulty. Red turned to Barret.

Let's go. He said.

4. Default Chapter Title

The Revolution: Chapter Four The Revolution -Final Fantasy 7
> Part One: The Slumber

> Chapter Four
> By L u f i a<a>
>
 Red XIII was right about the village.

After some walk over the snows, they encountered a remote hamlet covered in icicles.

The group made their way over, noticing the beautiful hue the village was reflecting under the night fallen sky. Children were playing around, sliding up and down the slanted pathways, giggling and laughing. Older ones walked to and fro, oblivious to this sudden group of strangers. Some of them were on their roof, sweeping away the newly fallen snows. Peaceful cloud of smoke indicated that it was nearly dinner time.

Barret and the gang stood, silently watching the peaceful village. It wasn't surprising to realize that such village existed. It was obvious that they wanted to live unnoticed.

Barret finally turned towards Vincent. "Well? This looks like the place to start looking."

Vincent closed his eyes briefly for a moment then reopened it.

"No." He said. "She's not here in this village."

Red XIII looked up. "Then, what do we do?"

"What do you mean 'what do we do'? We take some rest, that's what we are gonna do!" Yuffie cried through her chattering teeth. "A hot chocolate wouldn't do any harm right now!"

"Unless you are afraid of gaining extra pound on your butt." Barret added with fake seriousness, nodding. Yuffie glared. "Hey! I am skinny enough to eat whatever I wanna eat!"

"In that case, it's gonna look morebizaar." Barret commented grinning, imagining the extra pound he had mentioned.

Yuffie lunged forward but Vincent stopped her, extending his arm in front of her.

"Enough." He said when she tried to push his arm away. "Time is short. We've gotta move forward."

Yuffie stopped her struggle. "What??" She exclaimed, her eyes growing wide. "Are you crazy? What do you planning to do in the middle of the night? It's gonna be so dark that you wouldn't even know dead ends right under your nose!"

"You have better idea?"

"Yeah! We stay here and rest until daybreak! Oh, and I am not going anywhere around this place anymore! It's freezing the hell outta me!"

Vincent's eyes wandered off to the spot beyond the back side off the village.

Clear outline of white mountains stood, looking very small from here. He glanced back Barret and Red as if he didn't hear Yuffie's tantrum.

"I have a feeling our destiny lies over the mountain range." He stated, his eyes revealing nothing. Red glanced that the mountains then back at Yuffie. "Then, we have no choice but to follow. Right, Yuffie?"

Yuffie's face immediately tensed defensively, deep frown lining her forehead. "Nope! I am staying right here! Nothing's gonna make me go to that horrible place, and I mean horrible! Just look at my lips! My legs! OOOH, my poor ears!" Yuffie whined loudly and started to rub her ears vigorously. "I am going in. I bet the services of the inn is pretty good."

Vincent looked down at her keenly. "Are you sure you are staying here because you need a decent sleep? Weren't you having some plan when everyone was fast asleep?"

Yuffie immediately flushed red, darting a quick glance at the materia shop among the houses. But it changed into purely innocent face of an angel. "What do you mean, Mr. Valentine? I have NO idea what you are talking about."

"I take that as a 'yes, I am thinking about rubbing that materia shop near the inn'." Barret piped in, smug grin on his face. She was about to snap at him when Vincent shook his head and spoke up.

"Too bad. Then, you won't be interested in gaining the other precious materia in this region, now, would you?" He provided nonchalantly. Yuffie's ears perked up but she kept her face highly impassive. "What materia are you talking about?" She asked with the face of total indifference. Others had already detected a hint of interest in her eyes.

Red XIII and Barret listened, not daring to speak up and quite fascinated with how this stoic figure had a way at handling situations that had reached its limitation.

Vincent's eyes held hers for a moment. "The 'Perfect materia'." He said. Then, he shrugged a little. "But since you are not interested and rather sleep, I can't force you to go with us." He turned away without another word.

While Barret and Red XIII waited for her reaction, Yuffie watched as Vincent briskly made his way over to one of the villagers sweeping the doormat. They immediately averted their gaze away when Yuffie turned to them sharply.

"What do you think, guys? Do you think what he says is true??" She demanded, her eyes perplexed.

"I never saw him THAT serious, Yuffie." Barret replied gently, forcing in his laughter. Yuffie hit his stomach. "He was ALWAYS serious!" She screamed, glaring both at him and Red XIII.

Laughing, Barret walked away towards Vincent. Yuffie turned to Red for help.

"I really don't know what to do, Red. If I follow him, then I am giving up this diamond opportunity and"

"So you WERE planning on robbing that store!" Red exclaimed,

reprimending look on his face. Yuffie merely waved it away with her hand. "Nevermind that. My career is on the line. If I don't follow him, then I am missing the grand opportunity of getting my hands on that whatever materia that is. It sounded good, so it MUST be some ancient materia from the past."

Yuffie's face crumbled as if ready to cry. "Oh, what should I do, Red?"

Red XIII smiled and slowly shook his head. "I think you already know the answer, Yuffie." With that, he walked off to the other two. Yuffie watched, biting on her lips. Her eyes stayed on Vincent, his serene expression never faltering.

Suddenly, her mind was up.

"Oh, what the heck. I'll probably regret this~!" She muttered, scratching the back of her head irritatively. Then, she started to strophe after Red XIII. "Hey, I'm in! Count me in!" She hollowed.

She missed to see the thin smile on Vincent's face as she stood next to him.

Rufus, the President of Shinra, stood, looking through the huge window that stretched out as far as the wall could carry it. The scenery down was beautiful as well as romantic with limelights and neon signs from the cities below, hustle and bustle going on unheard from his place.

The night sky stretched before his eyes like a wide universe itself.

Scintillating stars dotted the vast cosmos like a precious jewel, adding up to the beauty.

Although he was looking, Rufus wasn't enjoying any of it. In fact, it was the same scene every day so he was getting quite tired at it.

In disgust, he turned around away from the window. He could never get to enjoy the sky without thinking about his world. And because he got depressed whenever he thought of one, he rarely felt any pleasure in viewing them. Especially not when his mind was so much occupied.

He was thinking about the talk he had with Hojo that afternoon.

Before his father had died, the old man always warned him that the highest place was always the dangerous spot and nonetheless lonely one.

If Rufus would ever follow his footstep, which the old man hoped he would, he wanted him to be extremely cautious. Being in a high place meant more power, therefore, more enemy.

And Hojo was one of his list of people he should rarely associate.

With his occasional mumbling and strange thoughts in his head, he struck Rufus as a psycho, a mere insane. At first, Rufus didn't regard him as much threat. But, it didn't take a long time for him to realize the singular mind behind that head of his was always filled with something ominous, something important as well as vital, that Rufus couldn't help but listen to his words. Hojo didn't share his own thoughts that much so Rufus didn't get to hear everything from the horses' mouth. Being secretive was one thing, but annoying was another thing in Rufus's eyes. Rufus didn't like the things Hojo kept for himself so that afternoon, he summoned him and had asked him some questions on various finds of his.

Hojo was the one who had wanted the Ancient.

Rufus frowned, thinking back to the time of their conversation.

....

".""

"Hojo, quit mumbling and just say it aloud so that I can hear too.""

"I don't want to report anything that is not certain""

"It's ok.""

".""

"Hojo?""

"Have you heard of 'The Revolution'?""

"???""

"I thought as much. You see, only the chosen few receive such knowledge""

"And you are the chosen few?""

"I merely burrowed the knowledge of the 'chosen few'""

"And who might that be?""

" " ""

"Nevermind. Tell me about this revolution.""

"It's predicted that the greatest revolution will occur on this earth.""

"A prediction?""

"Yes on that day, the land and the nature itself will revolt against us humans and no human will ever be able to stop it once it happens.""

_ Nobody knows how or when it will happen, but one thing certain is that the caller of this disaster is none other than ourselves, the humans._

_ ***It's when the earth will open up right in front of thine eyesrevealing its earths' corethere will be death, there will be sufferings, and thou who shalt appease this anger of land will be receiving the eternal lifethat's what is said in the script"_

_ "will there be a lot of damage to this land if thatever happens?"_

_ "No one can predict that. The system works all the same. Only the strong survivesweaklings parishIt's something like that."_

_ "And thiseternal life is what you seek, Hojo?"_

_ "I don't believe in that kind of makebelieve, sir. I believe in science."_

_ "Then what's the issue here?!"_

_ "I've told you everything I know, sir."_

_ "No, you have not. You also wanted that Ancient. Now, why would you need her?"_

_ ""_

_ "You have no choice, Hojo. I am not like my father."_

_ "I've noticed."_

_ "Now, tell me."_

_ "I merely want her as a 'key'"_

_ "A key?"_

_ "I really can't tell you, even if you force me or torture me. I don't want to speak of anything that does not have sufficient proof or data."_

_ "If that's the case, when will you gain sufficient data?"_

_ "The time I get my hands on the Ancient."_

_ "And then you'll tell me everything?"_

_ "yes."_

_ "Good."_

....

_ Ha! Good indeed!_ Rufus scoffed. It wasn't good. It wasn't enough to satisfy him. And yet, he'd let Hojo off the hook. He would never forget that jubliant face and menacing glint in that dark eyes of him.

Damn! There must be something more!! Frustrated, Rufus clenched his fist and tried to sort through his anger. Then, exhaling deeply, he closed his eyes for a brief moment.

This is going to be just fine once the Turks find that Ancientthen, everything will be fine

Feeling a little better, Rufus crossed the room and went inside his private chamber. He went over to the cupboard and took out a bottle of gold liquid.

_ Only if I could just pour this frustrations onto somebody only if I could talk to somebody about my feelings_

Rufus also took out a wine glass.

He was always alone when he was small. His father would not allow him to play outside with his own ages and didn't even send him to school. He'd let several boring tutors take care of his education.

His father also took away his toys when he reached the age of 4. Rufus still remember crying himself to bed because his favourite Poo bear was torn into pieces right in front of his eyes. He had hid it before it could be taken away, but his father caught him playing with it one day. Never in his life saw father so furious. He snatched the toy away from his little hands and ripped the toy apart right on that spot.

"You are my son!"

_ "Daddy?"_

_ "No son of mine is going to be treated like a normal kid! You are going to lead this company after me! Don't you EVER forget that!"_

Rufus smiled bitterly.

He always had a violent temper. Wonder how he managed to keep a straight face in front of his employee

Rufus poured himself a glass. Thinking about the past always depressed him. The forbidden childhood he spent was like a sour taste in his heart.

Only if he could go back

"What am I thinking?" Rufus shook his head with a grin. He glanced down at the shining crystalline cup, shaking it gently between his fingers. He saw vague reflection of his own face.

Two saddened green eyes looked back at him.

"I must be getting old" He remarked, sipping the liquid.

_Swelland he was only

23_

Reno turned off the mobile phone in his palm, mildly irritated.

Elena, who was sitting across the table, leaned forward. "Was it Reeve?" She asked.

Reno nodded, throwing the communicator onto the table. "Yeah, that was him alright. Didn't say much about their situation, though."

They were inside the Turks office, planning on their strategy. Dust covered shelves and high stacks of untouched papers filled the office, making it look like a pig's sty than a professional's working office.

"What did he say?" Elena asked, watching Reno put his foot leisurely on the table and leaning back on his chair with his hands at the back of his head. "At least, he must have said something, didn't he?" She added.

Reno frowned a little. "Well, if he was going to tell us some info about their location, he should have said the exact place."

Elena bit her lips and watched Reno closing his eyes without further explanation. "What did he say then?"

Reno looked at Elena in displeasure. "Since when were you so much interested in our mission, Elena? What difference does it make?"

"I just want to hear as a member of your team." Elena replied, forcing in her pride as she swallowed. Reno sighed heavily.

"Fine." He glanced at Elena at the corner of his eyes. "He said that the team's been dispersed."

Elena raised an eyebrow. "Dispersed?"

Reno nodded impatiently. "I told you he didn't say where or how they were dispersed. He just said something about team dividing into two and suddenly he lowered his voice and said-" He put on a sad little puppy-dog eyes with his mouth in an ugly pout. " 'Ooops, I gotta go. I really am sorry, Reno. I can't talk right now. I'll contact you as soon as I get another chance.' " He straightened his face back to normal. "Pathetic loser."

"Don't say that." Elena defended weakly. Reno merely scoffed.

Both of them sat there without a word for a short moment. Finally, Elena looked up slightly. "Wellnot what do we do? We don't know their location yet."

Reno furrowed his brows. Then, he turned his eyes towards her quickly. "Where's Rude?"

"He's checking on the vehicle we are going to take with us."

Reno slowly nodded. "Then, we wait."

Elena watched him as he turned his gaze away to stare at the door of

the office. Again, heavy silence hung low in the room as they sat there, unmoving.

Looking at Reno, Elena could tell that he was as confused as she was. He probably was out of his wits by now because of their sudden dead-end. Whatever he was pondering on his mind, Elena suspected that it didn't meet his appeal. Elena was sure that it wouldn't meet hers too.

Only if Tseng was here

If he was alive, Elena was positive that Tseng would have the solution to this situation at hand. Elena already missed him. She had already gotten used to his short, yet sensible and logical orders and it had begun to feel like a music in her ears. The absence of their leader felt critical to her and she was pretty sure that Rude shared her opinion.

Maybe Reno was thinking that too.

Were you really killed by the Avalanche, Tseng? Did the Ancient kill you?

It didn't matter. They were the Turks. Once the mission was given, they had to obey, putting aside their personal opinions and feelings. Elena was still getting used to the system.

A sudden opening sound of the office door broke the silence.

Elena stood up quickly and Reno looked up as Reno's tall figure stood within the door frame. "I have news." He said in a low voice.

Reno slowly got up. "What is it, Rude?"

Instead of answering, Rude stepped aside into the room to reveal another person standing behind him. Elena frowned a little while Reno gazed at him with questioning eyes.

The boy had a fine complex with skinny arms and legs. Some may call him lanky but he had a slight build on his shoulders, which showed that he was no wuss.

"We have a new recruit."

Bright, friendly purple eyes looked around the room with curiosity. They had such an innocent look that Elena judged his age to be about 15.

Straight red hair was growing down till his eyes and the side of his head was shaved off. Two silver earrings adorned each of his ear and small white bandage was stuck on his right cheeks. Elena smiled slightly as she looked at the torn-off knees on his jeans. He looked like a regular punk than an official recruit of a company.

He chewed on his bubble gum as if it took a bulk of his energy. He glanced at each of them. "You guys are wearing suits." He commented. "I hate 'em. If I ever wear one and sit for an hour, I gotta wedge."

Elena rolled her eyes while Reno tried hard to keep a straight face.

"Who brought you here, son?" He asked after a discreet cough. The boy pointed at Rude with an innocent face. Reno shook his head. "No, no. Who recruited you here? Was it Shin-ra?"

The boy shrugged. "Dunno. I was just surfing on my airboard with my friends and were having a war with that pesky guys living down the alley and I was about to put a bullet through his chest with my gunarm when this- "

"Wait a minute." Reno interrupted quickly, noticing the familiar piece of equipment on the boys' right arm. Elena had failed to see the weapon on his arms because he had it behind his back. But, watching the heavy piece of gun swinging up and down the owner's arms as if it weighed nothing, Elena didn't doubt that it was indeed the same weapon.

The boy smiled. "Oh, this?" He asked, raising his arm for them to observe. "Well, back from my sector, Avalanche was real popular group. We were their fans. We especially liked this neat arm the leader had so we just- "

"-cut off your own living arm?" Elena finished in a horrified tone. Reno gave her a reprimending look but the boy merely laughed. "Heh heh, no. Who would be crazy enough to cut off their own living flesh?" Then, he subdued his tone. "No, we were born that way. We were born without our hand. Our parents abandoned us when we were born. Didn't realize that why when we were kids but now, we know." The boy lowered his head a bit, his face saddening. "Yeah, me, Tam and Corawe all know"

Elena felt her eyes moisten. Her heart was filled with sympathy towards this boy. Rude showed no emotion. He must have heard it all from the company before accompanying him here to the office. Reno looked bored. He glanced at the boy from head to toe in his quick, scrutinizing way. "So, there's three of you with that thing."

Slowly, the color started to come back to his face as he straightened himself and nodded in Reno's direction. In a way, he didn't seem to realize the situation he was in right now. He didn't look that uncomfortable and all he showed was mild curiosity. Elena briefly remembered the girl she saw before.

Barrets' daughter. They had the similar innocence. This boy looked like more like a kid forced into the age of adolescence.

Poor thing

Reno lifted up his chin. "There must be a reason for you to be brought here." He said, his eyes missing nothing. "Just how good are you?"

The boy looked across at him with caution, catching on. He must be smarter than he showed on the surface. He stared back.

"What do you mean?" He asked carefully marshalling up the next question.

"Just how good are you at killing people?"

He must have known that it would come to this. He took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. "I knew you guys were some kind of terrorist organization." He remarked after a brief pause. Reno grinned. "Well, Something like that." Then, he hardened his tone. "So, just how good are you?"

The boy hesitated. He suddenly looked uncomfortable as if he didn't know what to utter next. "I don't kill people." He said at length. Reno raised an eyebrow.

"But you just told us that you were about to put a bullet through person's chest, were you not?"

The boy cast a nervous glance around him, refusing to meet their eyes. "That was a different thing." He muttered hesitantly.

Elena quickly came to his defense. "You don't have to join if you don't like it." She offered. Her words were replied by stone cold glare of Reno's.

"Isn't it true, Reno? We don't force people to join. That doesn't meet our policy." Elena hastily added with an uneasy smile but it faded when Reno slowly shook his head.

"Wrong, Elena." He replied. "We don't force people to like our ways. We don't care in that matters. But, it's our choice whether a person joins or leaves. It's not an option."

Elena lowered her gaze with her lips trembling a little.

Poor thing

He still looked like he needed love and care from someone. But then, he was a motherless child, so if they train him well, he might be fit into the Turk's material. The only drawback was the side-affect of such change. He was like a wild animal they were trying to tame forcibly.

For the sake of the kid, Elena smiled broadly. "Well, then, I think you are stuck with us, kid." She remarked in a teasing tone. The boy glanced at her. He didn't look scared but he didn't look that happy either. He merely looked like a blank piece of paper. "Welcome aboard Mr" Elena put on a rueful smile. "Didn't even catch your name. What is it?"

The boy finally smiled a little. It looked faking to her. Elena realized that he was smiling for the sake of her too.

"Name's Daemon, pretty Ma'am." He replied. "Daemon Tecquil."

End
file.